SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC LIBRARY
3 1223 00350 1757

NA HOWELL

Wife of Jefferson Davis

ERON ROWLAND

1

B D298r

Rowland

Varina Howell.

265706

Jul27'43 87636

MAY 15 1954 4

Book No. B D298r 1

Accession 265706

SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC LIBRARY

VITA SINE LITERIS MORS EST

FORM 16-15M-12-27

Varina Howell
Wife of Jefferson Davis

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
NEW YORK · BOSTON · CHICAGO · DALLAS
ATLANTA · SAN FRANCISCO

MACMILLAN & CO., LIMITED
LONDON · BOMBAY · CALCUTTA
MELBOURNE

THE MACMILLAN CO. OF CANADA, LTD.
TORONTO

VARINA HOWELL—
MRS. JEFFERSON DAVIS.

Varina Howell
Wife of Jefferson Davis

BY
Eron Rowland
Mrs. Dunbar Rowland

VOLUME I

New York
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
1927

All rights reserved

Copyright, 1927
By THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

Set up and printed
Published November, 1927

B
D298n 1

265706

3 1223 00350 1757

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
BY THE CORNWALL PRESS

TO THE MEMORY OF

My Father and My Mother

WHO IN BESTOWING UPON ME THE GOOD GIFTS OF THEIR SOCIETY AND AN OLD LEATHER-BOUND LIBRARY DREAMED NOT HOW MUCH THEY WERE CONTRIBUTING TO MY FUTURE HAPPINESS.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
	Foreword	xi
I.	Ancestry — The Howells	1
II.	Ancestry — The Kempes	12
III.	Birth and Childhood	18
IV.	Early Enivronment	26
V.	Girlhood	42
VI.	At 'The Hurricane'	51
VII.	In Closer Touch	59
VIII.	Holiday Pleasures	69
IX.	Lovers	78
X.	Engagement. Girlhood Confidences	82
XI.	Whig and Democrat	90
XII.	Marriage	97
XIII.	The Bridal Tour	102
XIV.	Brierfield	114
XV.	In Public Life. Visit of Calhoun	126
XVI.	Accompanies Her Husband to Washington	137
XVII.	First Glimpses of Washington	144
XVIII.	A Congressman's Wife	153
XIX.	Incidents of Washington Life	161
XX.	Day at the National Exhibition	169
XXI.	Faces Out of the Past	178
XXII.	War With Mexico	197

CHAPTER		PAGE
XXIII.	A Soldier's Wife	206
XXIV.	Monterey and Buena Vista	213
XXV.	Return of the Volunteers	222
XXVI.	Brierfield Reopened	229
XXVII.	From Brierfield to the Senate	234
XXVIII.	A Senator's Wife	242
XXIX.	Cuban Incident. Social Life of the Thirtieth Congress	251
XXX.	The First Crisis	260
XXXI.	From Brierfield to the Cabinet	267
XXXII.	Wife of a Cabinet Officer	281
XXXIII.	First Sorrow. Husband's Labors as War Minister	289
XXXIV.	Salon and Portrait Gallery	298
XXXV.	Thirty-sixth Congress. Old Issues Revived	324
XXXVI.	Secession Raises Its Head	331
XXXVII.	A Summer in New England	348
XXXVIII.	Political and Social	361
XXXIX.	Democratic Convention in Charleston, 1860	375
XL.	Secession of South Carolina	387
XLI.	South Carolina Invites the Other Southern States to Join Her in Secession	402
XLII.	The Return South	414
XLIII.	A President's Wife	430
XLIV.	Last Days at Brierfield	444

ILLUSTRATIONS

Varina Howell—Mrs. Jefferson Davis . . . . *Frontispiece*

OPPOSITE PAGE

Jefferson Davis at the age of thirty-two 98

Varina Howell at the age of eighteen years 100

Jefferson Davis and Mrs. Davis, 1849 142

Brierfield, 1850 268

Jefferson Davis as member of the Cabinet 408

FOREWORD

In presenting this volume to the countless number of people already deeply interested in any research pertaining to the illustrious woman of whose antecedents, childhood and young womanhood, I have endeavored to write in a worthy manner, I first must say that I wrote this early life of Varina Howell because I love her; because I am in love with her joyous, fearless and earnest youth; because I am in love with the gladness, sincerity and all the robust, divine purposes of her womanhood; because I am in love with her strong unflinching pride, her enduring strength, her depth and power of love, her loyalties, her infinite tenderness, her sound good sense, her salty, gay good humor, her laughter and her tears; because I am in love with her transcendant and manlike courage and fortitude in later years. During this early period only bright colors are seen, rich and velvety with Reubensesque touches and without contrasting shadows, not so compelling perhaps as later years revealed her but delighting and begetting love of her in all women who love charm and grace and beauty. O spirit of Southern womanhood, of New Jersey, of Virginia, of the Mississippi Valley, of New England summers, of America, of Queens, of First Ladies, of heroines, of motherhood, of wifehood, of sisterhood, more charming and compelling you become the closer I draw to you! And loving you, Varina Howell, and all women like you as I do, it gave me joy unspeakable to write your young life, to, as Deitell said of his Joan, connect myself with you in this unbreakable bond.

In this foreword it might be well to relate an incident connected with my first association with and discovery of the unusual woman of whom I have written. Like numbers of Southern children who were infants during the hard decades following the War for Southern Independence and belonging to that class known as the "broken down aristocracy of the South" I later aspired to write and at the age of seventeen, as a first attempt at novel writing, produced a volume of near six hundred pages. One could easily guess that it was a story relating to the War Between the States still fresh in the memory of my mother and aunts and of the other women about me, all of whom spent the greater portion of their time grieving over the failure or else the results of the Southern Confederacy. Trammelled by the countless handicaps and hardships of the Reconstruction period which, for twenty years or more, cut short educational advantages, my first literary attempt was crude enough; but like all novices I believed that it had merit and later sent the manuscript to Mrs. Jefferson Davis for a first criticism. One can readily imagine my delight when I received a letter from her telling me in substance that she thought well enough of the manuscript to propose to take it to New York with a view of submitting it to the publishers. Much necessary correspondence passed between us relating to the matter, and it was through this medium that I discovered for myself the helpful, hopeful and compelling personality of the woman who, though already spent it would seem with the shock of experiences that come only to the great of earth, was still vital, fresh and curious enough to be interested in one just entering the open roads of life. And in many senses of the word she was great. Among the first of that brilliant coterie of wives of the men who left so deep an impress

upon the middle decades of nineteenth century American history to write a memoir of her times, she succeeded in giving to the world one of the best interpretations of the historical significances and movements of the period and one freest from all personal vanity and prejudice. It might be argued that she was writing the life of her husband not that of her own, but there are many opportunities for a vain, egotistical and self centered woman to exploit herself and private prejudices in any biography of her husband. The inate good taste and good sense that characterized her life throughout are displayed in her *Memoir*. Her personal correspondence, in which she gives us more intimate glimpses, breaths of a wholesome good will and outlook even when life was overhung with the darkest clouds of adversity and the gay good humor, so natural to her, had grown slightly tart with raillery and mockery. Or was the flavor of it always there to the undoing of the pretender? In my first acquaintance with her, if she impressed me with something of the peculiar awe that I felt for my father's sword, though some phases of her life still inspire it, in closer contact, it wore appreciably away and I had the impression of her as a strong woman, one still vital and in love with the divine purposes of life. In one of her letters to me relating to the matter of such deep interest to me, she wrote that, were she financially able, she would have my manuscript recopied and put in shape for publication. In another letter she saddened a little, and she at times knew utter sadness, over the lack of means with which to lighten the struggle with poverty. Another told me of her leaving the Marlborough House for more modest lodgings while engaging in literary work of a varied nature, some of which did not bear her signature. My novel, among other defects, proved to be too condemna-

tory of the North and with all her effort in my behalf, it came to naught. The North at that time did not want to hear anything about the South, believing that it already knew enough that was bad. As a proof of the statement, given in a spirit of humor and not in defense of my literary venture, I have in my possession an original letter, found among the Davis papers, from the Appleton Publishers to James Redpath, residing for a time on the Biloxi Coast for literary purposes, requesting him to discontinue his sympathetic articles about the South, that the North would not stand for it.

Little did I dream at that time it would in the future be my privilege to write the life of Varina Howell known only to me then by the awe inspiring name of Mrs. Jefferson Davis, but in the circumstances of things the task has come to me and in presenting this first volume, which was prepared in 1926 after much preliminary research of a laborious character, I have based it on original documentary sources and authentic information from mother to daughter and later upon the words of contemporaries, those who knew her intimately as the happy young wife of Jefferson Davis during the period preceding the War between the States. Among those who have furnished me with intimate personal information during that period, though many have given fragmentary items, none have been of more assistance to me than Mrs. Harriet B. Kells, of Mississippi, whose family was contemporary with the Howells.

In the preparation of this first volume it gives me pleasure to acknowledge the assistance of my husband along historical lines. I have not made as good use, perhaps, of his assistance as I should have done and in all probability would

have presented a more acceptable volume had I in several particulars accepted his views, but in every undertaking one should put one's self in the effort or else it becomes artificial, a counterfeit, to be classed with the lip laughter so despised by the Lesbian. If my critics prove to be censorious, I have braced myself for any onslaught they might see fit to make knowing that few who write history escape criticism. I believe, however, that the time has come when all who contemplate the Titanic struggle between the States concede that there is glory enough for all and that in the bestowal of praise not one should be deprived of his due.

THE AUTHOR

Varina Howell
Wife of Jefferson Davis

VARINA HOWELL, WIFE OF JEFFERSON DAVIS

CHAPTER I

ANCESTRY—THE HOWELLS

Of the many remarkable women of the ruling classes who have appeared in history none, perhaps, have been more universally admired for some particular characteristic than Queen Elizabeth and Queen Victoria of England, and in remoter ages Andromache, wife of Hector, if the last mentioned may be numbered with flesh and blood women. Each possessed a single virtue, so great that it won for them an exalted and isolated prestige in the eyes of mankind. But in no one of these do we find the combination of great traits and virtues expressed in the character and personality of Varina Howell, wife of Jefferson Davis, President of the Southern Confederacy. The strong will, clear judgment, chivalry and valor of Elizabeth, the deep good sense, adaptability and lovableness of Victoria, the strength of purpose, tenderness, affection and loyalty of Andromache were all to be found in an unusual degree in the nature and character of this great American woman. I do not draw this portrait in silhouette of her as a foreword to inform the reader that she will be portrayed in these pages either as a saint or as a martyr, though there were numerous passages in her life, experiences of which, triumphantly borne, easily make her claim good to both titles. She, however, made no stronger claim to worth than the right thinking woman of ability and distinction should make for herself, and such as she believed herself to be and had striven to make herself

will she be portrayed here, with the further earnest effort to catch the lustre in the fabric of her life as it was woven hard and fast in the loom of great circumstances.

If there is truth in pagan belief that the occult plays some part in the lives of mortals, in this instance it would seem that both the Fates and the stars had worked together for good in proof of their ability to create the godlike in the earth-born. It was a usual trick of theirs, however, that with a rich and ample birthright—and one can believe it as they look around on their fellows, must go the usual price of such high favor. In this instance the requirement was that the feet of this girl child of special favoritism and blessings should tread far and difficult paths not once but many times in the course of a long, eventful and unusual career. If these high sources had singled her out for special favor, it can be believed that they had also equipped her with such weapons as would make her equal to any situation that might overtake the earth-born. So much for the ancient but still tantalizing mysticism which had its roots in pagan faiths, has left fascinating traces in biblical lore, and, vast centuries old, was still at the birth of Varina Howell not without some influence—to exonerate the father and the physician, on the mind of both the mother and the nurse. As inexplicable phenomena it has lasted long, and the psychically inclined claim is not yet done with. To taboo it altogether, observation teaches us that when the forces of civilization begin to operate in the creation of great historical dramas men and women come forward especially fitted for their parts; nor does history often assign to her chief roles smallings or weaklings, nor frame her heroes and heroines out of stunted growths. There was never greater proof of this than in the present instance.

Coming of some of the best types of the most advanced European races Varina Howell was born at a high peak of the history of a strong young nation, a nation not emerging from primitive conditions nor one beginning a renaissance after decay, but one that on transplantation had become a more virile type than its ancestral stocks. So, much was ready for the flowering of this rare personality, racy of the soil, yet exotic in culture. In tracing her lineage one finds her descended from an ancestry exclusively confined to the British Isles and drawn from its several races. Through the paternal line she inherited the characteristics of the English, Welsh and Scotch, while her maternal strain furnished what might be called the active essence that leavened and lightened the more stolid and substantial qualities of her being.

When the author of "Recollections, Grave and Gay" wrote of Mrs. Jefferson Davis, in after life, that she was "declared to be a woman of warm heart and impetuous tongue, witty and caustic with a sensitive nature underlying all, a devoted wife and mother and a most gracious mistress of a salon" and further that "the lady of the Confederate White House could be depended upon to conduct her salon with extreme grace and conventional ease," that "everybody who was not in deep mourning attended her receptions," and "all gay, young society was chaperoned by her," one sees even in this passing portraiture by one of the best cultured women of the Confederate Capital, who was spokesman for the society around her, marked resemblances to Elizabeth, Victoria and Andromache.[1] Furthermore they find in it a full refutation of all vicious criticism made by the censorious and disaffected

[1] See "Recollections, Grave and Gay" by Mrs. Burton Harrison (Constance Cary of Richmond, Va.)

of that day. It remained for the rarely endowed and gifted author, Mary Boykin Chestnut, who was so intimately and closely associated with Varina Howell Davis to give to the world and posterity the best portrait of her during the tragic years of the Southern Confederacy. In these numerous references one gets at the core of the truth concerning the woman who suffered much and for the most part in silence for all Southern womanhood. Of her Mrs. Chestnut wrote in the following tender and graceful outline: "Mrs. Davis came in so softly that I did not know she was here until she leaned over me and said, 'A great battle has been fought;' of an evening spent in heartening the Confederates, 'Mrs. Davis said something more amusing than ever;' of a bereaved wife, 'It had been decided that Mrs. Davis should be the one to tell her of her sorrow'—and yet again, 'Women and children must keep quiet when the President is sick.' "[1]

Such true and exquisite lines and tints as are seen here make a portrait the Masters might well be glad to claim as their own. Beauty of person, individuality and charm of manner, however, came to Varina Howell through every strain of blood. The Howells were a well-favored people, finely proportioned, clear-eyed, well poised and enduring. The Quaker Burrs, from all accounts were noted for physical beauty and brilliancy of intellect, characteristics that reappeared in both Varina Howell and Theodosia Burr. The Kempes, many of whom were of high colonial position in Virginia, were handsome, keen-witted and sprightly and, while quick tempered, possessed the known Irish characteristic of good humor. The Grahams of Prince William County, Virginia, from whom Varina Howell was descended,

[1] See "A Diary from Dixie" by Mrs. Mary Boykin Chestnut.

were of the best type of Colonial settlers, younger generations of whom sought the lower South in search of cotton lands for their increasing slave labor.

The Howells came from the ancient town of Caerleon, Monmouthshire, England. Near the date of 1690, a son of this family of Howells emigrated to Delaware from Caerphilly, Glamorganshire, Wales, whither he had removed from Monmouthshire and where he belonged to the official life of the country. After settling in Delaware he removed to New Jersey where he permanently established his family. His son Richard Howell, born in Delaware in 1753, became a lawyer and before the American Revolution practiced at Mount Holly, New Jersey, while Lewis, his only brother, a twin, became a surgeon. A daughter married Colonel John Reed, who was distinguished in both military and civil service.

Strange as it may appear, on the part of the wife at least, Governor Richard Howell married Keziah Burr of the Society of Friends. A summary of his career drawn from various sources will be given a place in this volume in order to give the reader some idea of the traits and characteristics of the people from which Varina Howell sprung, and also to bring together in one place all available information concerning this distinguished American family.

Biographers tell us that young Richard Howell, on the opening of the War for American Independence, immediately raised a company and joined the Continental forces, and was promoted to the rank of major. While little more than a youth in 1774, he assisted in destroying the tea brought to Greenwich, New Jersey, by the ship *Greyhound*. He was made Captain of the Fifth Company, Second Battalion, in 1775, in the original establishment of the New

Jersey line. In November, 1775, his battalion was placed in garrison on the Hudson at the Highlands. The battalion was ordered to Canada in February, 1776, to assist in the expedition against Quebec, where it distinguished itself for having fired the first gun on the Plains of Abraham. In September, 1776, Major Howell was appointed Major, Second Regiment, New Jersey Troops, General Maxwell's Brigade, Major General Steven's Division. He took part and distinguished himself in a number of famous battles, including Brandywine, Monmouth and Germantown, and was the recipient of high commendation from General Washington.

An interesting family reminiscence runs that being intensely devoted to his twin brother, Dr. Lewis Howell, who was not expected to live, the day before the battle of Monmouth Richard obtained a leave of absence to visit him and for the occasion donned citizen's clothes. The British and Continental forces were hourly drawing in closer contact and the battle came on immediately, giving the young soldier no time to get into his major's uniform. The stifling of his desire to visit his dying brother, joining the ranks and fighting as a private in citizen's clothes struck General Washington as one of the notable self-sacrifices of the war. Richard Howell never again saw the brother in life which was a source of great sorrow to him. Washington had in the meantime become aware of Howell's unusual ability, his special qualification for missions of great trust and importance and made personal solicitation that he be selected for important and highly honorable secret missions to New York City, which was at the time in possession of the British. After having accomplished the object of his mission, which is not set forth in any account that the author has examined,

young Howell seized the opportunity to purchase upon his own responsibility a quantity of clothing for the ragged continentals. It is stated by biographers that he never asked to be reimbursed for the expenditure and this circumstance always afforded him a pleasing recollection. After the war he returned to the practice of law in New Jersey and later became chancellor of the State. In 1793, about the time the thriving Natchez Settlement—an English colony that had been established on the lower Mississippi in 1765 during English occupation, was in possession of Spain, Richard Howell was elected Governor of New Jersey, to which high position he was re-elected eight terms in succession. He was tendered the office again but on account of failing health and old age retired from public life. His death occurred in May of 1818. A quotation, used by Varina Howell in her *Memoir* evidently taken from some biography or from family letters the source of which has not come to the attention of the author, says that "with a highly cultivated mind and an improved understanding Governor Howell displayed a heart of unbounded benevolence, a temper easy and equable and manners polite and engaging."[1]

The early history of New Jersey bears the imprint of Richard Howell, and his descendants were destined to leave theirs on many sections of the American Union. That literary talent and aspiration were in the family is shown by the fact that Governor Howell was the author of the welcoming verses to General Washington upon his arrival at Trenton Bridge. On the same occasion his young daughter Sarah who later became Mrs. James Agnew of Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, was placed on a committee of ten young ladies of social prestige to scatter flowers in the pathway

[1] *A Memoir*, Vol. I.

of the great American commander. The mother of General James Chestnut was among the number and these names were to be associated once more in history.

Among the children of Richard Howell and Keziah Burr was William Burr, a fourth son. While little is known of the intimate characteristics of his mother except that she was a pretty young women of an engaging and kindly disposition, the influence of this fortunate daughter of the Society of Friends in her family, must have been strong enough since every member of it became distinguished which is full testimony that half, at least, of the steady purpose and poise of the next generation were inherited from this Quaker strain.

William Burr Howell, the father of Varina Howell, like his father, exhibited, when occasion demanded, a martial spirit, and it seems that the mother did not, in the instance either of husband or son, imbue them with certain peculiar doctrines of her sect that prohibit its men from engaging in war for any reason or cause. Keziah Burr's union with this strong, robust Englishman and the daily adjustment of her life to his would make interesting reading. Her masterful husband renowned for his soldierly qualities, what must have been her alarm when her young son William was appointed as an officer in the Marine Corps to later serve with distinction during the War of 1812? The quiet Quaker mother must have suffered many distresses if not qualms of conscience in witnessing in her own offspring this wholesale overthrow of the cherished faiths of her fathers. Or must one believe that the valor and courage her husband and sons evinced became for her a secret source of pride and pleasure? Surely some such glamour as the "light on the sword" must have charmed her maiden fancy.

William Burr Howell from all accounts displayed a remarkably dashing spirit in battle. In the Battle of the Lakes, though ill, he was on deck, careless of every danger and revelling in the excitement of the moment. His daughter Varina writing of him years later in describing his conduct in the battle said "At one time the fire was so hot that his stool was shot from under him and a tin cup of water which was handed to him at the same time was struck out of his hand by another ball."

The records show that he was three times commended in orders for extraordinary gallantry in action. A brother of William Howell, Franklin, was killed in active service and is said to be the John Howell listed in the roster of a volume entitled "The Naval Monument." It is an unusual record that informs us that every Howell of this family who participated in both the American Revolution and the War of 1812 was commended in orders for heroism.[1]

After the War of 1812 had terminated and peace had been declared between the new Republic and the Mother country, William B. Howell came down the Mississippi in 1815 on a flatboat, attracted by the marvelous reports that were beginning to be circulated about the Natchez region. He was an officer of the United States Army on half pay and had secured a leave of absence in order to explore the newly acquired territory in the far southern section. Flatboating down the Mississippi in those days and for several decades earlier was a favorite mode of travel on the vast ocean-like stream whose turbid waves were soon be plowed by stately craft, giant steamboats, which every one in that day who could pen a line described as "floating palaces." The earlier boats, however, were rougher craft propelled by

[1] *A Memoir*, Vol. I.

oars and sails, and the one that brought young Howell South was what was known as the emigrant boat, the downstream flatboat that never went back, but in many instances was knocked down to build the first shelter for the new comer. This variety was the special friend of the pioneers coming to this region at the dawn of the nineteenth century only to disappear for good with the establishment of the Southern Confederacy. There were two types of these boats besides a large variety of other craft, such as the upstream keels and barges that plied the great river bearing freight from and to the North, the New Orleans flatboat and the Kentucky broadhorn, the last so called because it was provided with a great tin horn that never failed to announce the boat's arrival.[1] This seemingly magical but comforting music was heard for miles along the river and from settlement to settlement within the interior.[2]

To the adventurous young son of New Jersey seeking his fortune in the new land, the surroundings and prospects were novel and inviting. Good fortune evidently awaited him, for on landing at Natchez among the first men whose acquaintance he made was Mr. Joseph Emory Davis, a well established lawyer of the little city.[3] As soon as the young man

[1] The only difference between the New Orleans and Kentucky flatboat was that the former was more substantially built and was entirely roofed over while the Kentucky broadhorn was only half roofed, of a frailer make and slightly less pretentious.

[2] Ten steamboats were plying the waters of the Mississippi about this time but prior to 1818 they were built for freight and carried few pleasure seeking. See Rowland's *Encyclopedia of Mississippi History.*

[3] Joseph Emory Davis, eldest brother of Jefferson Davis, President of the Southern Confederacy, while located in Natchez was a partner of Thomas B. Reed, one of the ablest lawyers of the State and afterwards United States Senator. Joseph Davis was himself considered an able and brilliant lawyer. His interest in the purchase of lands along the Mississippi about this time became paramount to all others and, on his marriage in 1827, he removed to his plantations which soon became known as the Davis Bend.

presented himself as the son of Governor Richard Howell of New Jersey, Joseph Davis knew immediately his social standing and, after looking him over carefully to satisfy himself that he was worthy of his lineage, the shrewd lawyer, still a young man himself, took the young stranger under his wing and into his confidence. The intimacy between them grew closer as time passed until finally it assumed the nature of brotherly affection, and doubtless had much to do with the connection of the families in marriage in after years.

CHAPTER II

ANCESTRY — THE KEMPES

JAMES KEMPE, the grandfather of Varina Howell, was, she records, "by birth an Irishman." There has been some controversy as to the place of his birth, but records, though somewhat meager, bear out the daughter's statement. Several authentic scraps of biography still on file state that he was a man of education, enjoyed classical literature and all the refinements of life and played brilliantly on the flute, an instrument of which he was very fond. Descendants of contemporaries invest him with qualities both of a heroic and benevolent nature.

The name *Kempe* is derived from an old English word signifying a soldier also a contender in single combat, being, records F. H. Kemp, in his history of the family, "the philological successor of the Anglo-Saxon *Cempa.*" "Examples of its use," the author continues, "may be found in the 'Ballad of King Estmere' printed in Bishop Percy's *Relics of Ancient Poetry* one of these being:

> 'Downe then came the kemperye men,
> And looked him in the eare.' "[1]

The Kempe family, sometimes spelled *Kemp,* appears in the history of Virginia about 1635 when Richard Kempe was Secretary of Virginia.[2] He later became acting Governor in 1649. He was descended from Sir Robert Kempe

[1] *The Kemp and Kempe Families of Great Britain and her Colonies.*
[2] "Journals of the House of Burgesses of Virginia, 1619-1658-59."

of Gissing, England. Matthew Kempe, also of the same family held high office in the Virginia Province. The Kempes were originally of Gloucester and Middlesex counties. All accounts of the family show them to have been aspiring and of a determined spirit. The family appears both in England and Ireland. A genealogical history of the Kempe family entitled "The Kemp and Kempe Families of Great Britain and Her Colonies" shows the family to have been one of the most prominent of the British Isles.

Anthony Campbell, the last survivor of the Irish immigrants to Virginia who were compelled to leave Ireland and flee to various parts because of their association with the United Irishmen of 1798, wrote of James Kempe that he was a native of Castlefin County, Donegal, Ireland, and also a member, with himself of the organization of United Irishmen. The fierce rebellion of 1798, in which the people of Ireland suffered nearly as much, perhaps, as did the people of France during the French Revolution, caused thousands to flee from that half-starved country to America. This tide of immigrants brought many settlers, refugees they could be termed, to Virginia and the Carolinas seeking earlier immigrants to the colonies. Among these participants of the Emmet rebellion were the Kempes and Campbells, some of whom later pioneered to the far southern section and settled at Natchez.[1]

It was to the band of United Irishmen, founded by Theobold Wolf Tone, that the ardent James Kempe belonged and it was nothing more than could be expected that he should bring with him much of the fiery spirit that had torn Wexford in tatters. In America he is found first in Prince

[1] Original Memoirs of Anthony Campbell, Mississippi Department of Archives and History.

William County, Virginia. Contrary to this, Henry S. Foote, a native of Virginia, in his "Casket of Reminiscences," states that James Kempe was born in that county, son of the immigrant. His aggressiveness is revealed in scraps of history preserved of him while a resident of this county. In a duel over politics which became famous in promoting sentiment for the passage of the anti-duelling law of the State of Virginia, James Kempe killed his opponent, a Mr. Bernard Hoe, who was a prominent citizen and an ardent Federalist. A sister of Hoe had married Dr. George Graham of Prince William County, described by Henry S. Foote as a man of exceptional merit and high social position.[1] It seemed a trick of Robin Goodfellow that young Kempe should find himself in love with the daughter of Dr. George Graham, described by the same author as a young woman of many personal charms and attractions, especially since friends thought enough about the impropriety of the marriage, owing to the duel, to raise objections. A vigorous protest was continued against it by those who were still influenced by long established social customs, grown into a creed, which held that the taking of life forbade such sacred ties as marriage between families. To fix matters beyond any probability of failure, a suitor was immediately found for the hand of the young woman and in a short time she became the bride of a Mr. Byrd, a wealthy, elderly bachelor who died a short while after the marriage, leaving the young wife free

[1] A daughter of John Graham of Prince William County, Virginia, married into the Wyatt family of Gloucester County, Virginia. Francis Wyatt of this family was Governor of Virginia, 1621-1625. He was the son of Sir George Wyatt of Kent, England. Dr. George Graham, Varina Howell's great grandfather, was buried in Prince William County. It is not the intention of the author to trace exhaustively the ancestry either of the Grahams, Kempes or Howells, the several notes upon the subject having been made merely to locate the families in the Colonial history of Virginia and New Jersey.

to follow where her heart led. Marriage, with broader experiences of life, had made her more self-reliant and she was strong enough to choose for herself the next time her happiness lay at stake, in the course of time becoming the wife of her ardent and quick tempered and, Campbell records, "jovial" Irish lover. James Kempe and his young wife, some years after their marriage, removed with their children and slaves to the Natchez District, which had become an American possession. Near the town of Natchez, he very soon acquired several large plantations, teeming with a virgin fertility unsurpassed anywhere in the young Republic. Soon the family was living in much style and affluence.

In the new Mississippi Territory, which then embraced all of Alabama and was one of the fairest prospects in the American Union for the pioneer from the older States, James Kempe continued to thrive, becoming one of the leading citizens of Natchez, the old historic English and Spanish stronghold that vied in charm and romance with any place in the older colonies. He was an ardent patriot and his spirited temperament found for a while free outlet for its pent-up energies in Andrew Jackson's coast campaign against the British during the War of 1812. Nothing it is said pleased him better than the trappings of a soldier. As Captain of the Natchez Troop of Horse, he was with Colonel Thomas Hinds, commander of the Mississippi Dragoons, first at Pensacola and later in the defence of New Orleans. He became Colonel of the Mississippi Cavalry when Colonel Hinds was appointed General of the State militia after the War. Throughout Jackson's campaign against the British, James Kempe's gallant conduct won for him high reputation as a patriot and soldier and it seemed a picking and choosing of the gods that, at the same time he was with Jackson,

young William Burr Howell, who was to become his son-in-law, was engaged with the enemy in the armies at the North.

When not assisting in military enterprises, James Kempe with his wife, still a beautiful young woman, ruled over his large plantation in what has been described as a "lordly style." The city of Natchez with its surrounding country, which had since early colonial occupancy boasted of families of much social prominence, was now beginning to more uniformly reflect the customs, culture and advantages of the older States, with the addition of more material wealth derived from the cultivation of cotton and the increase in slaves. The Kempes in addition to their Virginia background were among the well-bred, wealthy communicants of the Episcopal Church which then included much of what was termed the aristocracy of the State.[1] With these recognized props and stays, it was not surprising that they moved in the first social circles and as the years went by held themselves as the leaders and shapers of the political and social life about them.

A social occasion at the country place of James Kempe which attracted wide attention was a dinner given to Aaron Burr when he came on his mysterious voyage and mission down the Mississippi into the Natchez country. Few of the citizens of Natchez believed at first that any real guilt was attached to Burr's voyage, and the dinner was given merely in compliment to him as a distinguished visitor.

James Kempe's high-bred Virginia wife, transplanted in pioneer soil, early developed, as did all the new transplanted stock to this region, the spirit of thrift, though there was

[1] James Kempe, an ardent admirer of Jackson, affiliated with what was known as the Republican Party; a party that later was known as the Democratic Party.

always lavish hospitality and much fine clothing. Travelers in the South had already taken note of the laces, silks and plumes worn by the ladies of New Orleans and Natchez. With twenty years more of growth and progress, it is small wonder that much wealth and its demands for luxuries had come to these younger sons and daughters of the older States who by their own success tempted yearly more scions of the old stock hither until it was making light of one's own family for Virginia to be critical of her transplanted progeny.[1] Records boast that some of this accumulated wealth in the lower Mississippi valley flowed back to the old rooftrees whenever a decrepit relative could not stand the trip hence, for plenty and generosity are apt to go hand in hand. And there was plenty, a thing that was even at that day getting somewhat scarce in the eastern tobacco lands, creating a stronger tide south and westward. Nor did it come alone from the Southern Colonial States but from the rock fields of the New England States as well, which accounts for the unexpected flash at times of puritanical thought noticeable in certain families especially in the female portion, since traditions, customs, and practices stick in the memory of that sex longer than they do in that of the male.

[1] Eight thousand Virginia and a still larger number of North and South Carolina families were settled in the Natchez District of Mississippi at this period. Many highly educated representatives of New England families were also scattered among its population which included lawyers, ministers and numerous teachers.

CHAPTER III

BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD

James Kempe and his wife had been favored with a family of handsome children, one of whom, the third daughter Margaret Louisa, became the wife of William Burr Howell. It was through this union that the Kempe saga continued in the next generation. It was with no little pride for having first discovered and gauged his worth that Joseph E. Davis, still a young man himself, introduced his new-found friend from New Jersey to the most exclusive families of the pretentious little city, then taking itself very seriously. Its first families as they do in such instances everywhere today, for let what may change human nature remains the same, were quickly impressed and influenced by rumors of young Howell's family prestige in the State of New Jersey. Southerners at that time had no such antipathy for those of the Northern section as was developed in later periods, especially during and after the establishment of the Confederacy. The word "Yankee," while it might set one apart for a space, had no significance that was specially derogatory, still the blue-blooded Virginians and Carolinians held themselves a trifle better than the average the more northern section sent among them. It had grown to be a habit from generation to generation to do so, and habit has much to do with social status. Young Howell, however, felt no qualms as to his social position, so securely made for him by his immediate forebears. By 1823, he had established himself in the city

and had been the fortunate suitor out of a number of eager wooers for the hand of the beautiful Margaret Louisa Kempe, a reigning belle of the place. He has been described as a tall, handsome blonde, of great personal charm and possessing much native ability, coupled with education and good breeding. His marriage to Louisa Kempe occurred in 1823, the ceremony taking place in Old Trinity Episcopal Church in the presence of a large concourse of friends and admirers. The impressiveness of the occasion and a knowledge of its participants caused Anthony Campbell, both friend and family historian, to exclaim, and later record, in his memoirs "What a clutch of true blues there will be between the blood of Kempe and Howell." It was about as handsome a thing as Homer or Sappho could have said on such an occasion, and time proved that it was more than a prophecy. The marriage was in all probability performed by Reverend Albert A. Muller, who was rector of Old Trinity covering that period and for many years thereafter, and the moving spirit in the organization of the first Diocese in Mississippi.

After their marriage the young couple settled in Natchez, where they continued to live with the exception of an occasional summer tour to Northern resorts. Before his marriage young Howell had gone with his friend, Joseph E. Davis, to inspect lands lying along the Mississippi River in what is now Warren County. Mr. Davis already owned large tracts of the rich alluvial bottom lands along the river thirty or forty miles below Vicksburg, and his strong attachment for his young friend made him anxious that he should join him in taking up holdings in the same locality.[1] But

[1] These plantations owned by Joseph E. Davis, after a terrific storm that destroyed a portion of the main building acquired the name of "The Hurricane." The erosions of the river have caused many changes in the original shape and appearance.

young Howell after riding over the vast wilderness, then a gloomy prospect to even a landless pioneer, concluded that it was little more than a hot-bed of malaria and the instinctive dread of the Northerner for the Southern climate caused him to decline getting any nearer the "Mississippi Bottom," as it was then called and still is by some. To the reverse he was charmed with the high bluffs and beautiful upland forests around Natchez and preferred this part of the country to any other. Joseph Davis had taken a keen interest in his marriage, acting as his best man at the ceremony, and on the birth of their first child the Howells gave it the name of Joseph Davis.

The prominence of the two families made their deep friendship often a subject of comment. If there was any stronger motive than friendship on the part of Davis for his devotion to William Howell and his beautiful young wife it is not brought out in the meager records preserved of them. Louisa Kempe is said to have been a very handsome woman, but it is not likely that the brilliant young lawyer, already entering his prime, should have become infatuated with a young woman whom he had seen grow from childhood to womanhood, and the most natural explanation of the close and lifelong friendship is that it was a case of strong attachment, so often observed in the early days of the settlement of America between families who had pioneered from other localities. Be it as it may Joseph E. Davis, who married a few years later than his friend, continued to hold the Howell family closer to his heart than any other of the Natchez country, and several intermarriages in succeeding generations bound the two families by even closer ties.

The Howells, as their neighbors began calling them, ex-

hibited the same capacity for enjoyment that characterized the rich, well-bred planter folk around them, and no home in the small but exclusive Southern city was the scene of more social entertainment than "The Briers," named on account of the dense growth of Cherokee rose and bamboo that intermingled and twined about the stately magnolia, pine and oak covering the high red bluff on which the large, rambling, white building stood. The rugged formation of the river bank at this place with high, steep, red bluffs that sloped down almost perpendicular into little valleys sometimes as much as a hundred feet deep and covered with a heavy growth of magnificent trees, made a picturesque setting for the handsome homes of the wealthy planters who lived in and near the city. "The Briers" was a comfortable type of country home, though the house was much less pretentious in structure than the usual homes of the planters. It has been said that it was a gift to the young people from Louisa's parents, that young William was not of a thrifty kind and that numerous other bounties followed from time to time.

There was now but one shadow to disturb and mar the young couple's contentment and happiness. While still an infant, the baby Joseph began to show alarming symptoms of ill health and the case became so serious that the family physician advised a change of climate. This was agreed to eagerly by the father and after much family discussion the Kempes agreed that their daughter should accompany the young husband North for a season, the first and only visit that William and Louisa made as far North as New Jersey, while their children were young. Separated by many miles these never came in contact with their Northern kin until many years later and then to a limited extent.[1]

Though motorists might question it and the overland trip

[1] Conversations with descendants of contemporaries.

even at this day after a hundred years have elapsed might prove a risky adventure, it is authoritatively stated that the Howells in company with their friend Joseph Davis, who had arranged to visit his young brother, Jefferson, then a cadet of eighteen years at West Point, made the trip through the vast, scarcely broken wilderness in no stronger vehicle than a family carriage, going as far as the Ohio River from whence they proceeded in a boat until they struck the stage route. The trip after they had taken up stage-coach travel was for many days enlivened by several English tourists of note, and many pleasant details of it were described to her children by the happy mother in after years.[1] The most distinguished feature of the journey, however, was a visit to the imposing military academy on the Hudson, which she, with some awe, beheld for the first time and where she witnessed the meeting between Joseph E. Davis and his young brother Jefferson. Vividly impressed at the time with the deep affection the young man displayed for the elder brother, she little dreamed what the tall, handsome youth was to mean to her in years to come. It is recorded in family reminiscences that the young cadet, though for the most part having no eyes for anyone but the big, cherry-faced, bluff, elder brother, to whose strong arm he clung with boyish devotion and confidence, was deeply impressed with the beauty and charm of young Mrs. Howell, to which he referred many times throughout life. It was quite a circumstance that the little group who were to have so large a share in the future history of the country had been drawn together in pleasant companionship while yet so distant from the day of its en-

[1] These tourists, Cruikshanks, the English caricaturist, and Robert Dale Owen, founder of New Harmony, a socialistic society, were traveling through the country to gain impressions of it in 1825 and 1826.

actment. In the contact none could be conscious of the influences that were being set in motion to accomplish an end; while each felt that strange and subtle harmony stirred them, they knew it not for a faint, far prelude of a great drama moving on—andante, allegro, furiosamente, lamentando—through future years. It was, nevertheless, the first getting ready if not the opening lines of a drama whose actors were to command the profound attention of the world.

The Howells made a picture of happy content on the occasion, one that the young cadet never forgot. The trip North was further made enjoyable by the steady improvement in health of the baby Joe, and it was with much eagerness and pleasure that the young couple looked forward to the rest of the journey into New Jersey to meet the Howell relatives, with whom they were to remain for the season.

On their return to Natchez they again opened "The Briers" and settled down to enjoy life in the beautiful country whose attractions and advantages were such that no Northern prospect could ever entice the husband away from the land of his adoption. And he was not alone in establishing and fostering a rich civilization in the far south. Many hundreds of young sons of the first families of the older States were among his neighbors, wealthy planters, slaveholders, church people and in considerable numbers Whigs.

It was about this time that another baby came to enliven the Howell household, and much to the mother's delight it was a girl. At birth the child was given the name of Varina Anne Banks, but the last names were rarely used, though sometimes one comes across them in old records. She was born at "The Briers" near Natchez May 7, 1826. Besides herself and elder brother Joe there were several younger

children who came in orderly procession, and soon the rambling white house rang with peals of childish laughter. Nurses and governesses a plenty were in attendance, supplied for the most part by grandfather Kempe, who was said to be of a generous turn of mind.

The Howells were popular with their neighbors, and both kinsfolk and friends were loud in their admiration of the handsome group of children growing up some one said "to keep the Howell and Kempe names famous in the country."[1] In a dilapidated condition "The Briers" still stands on a high, red bluff of the Mississippi near the city of Natchez. The country was even more picturesque at that day it has been said than it is at present. Then deep bayous on the east swept down from high, elevated grounds at the depth of more than "a hundred feet." Though the trees around the old place are still widespreading, the dry, green valleys and baroque shaped uplands were formerly filled with a much more vigorous growth of magnolia, oak and gum, than they now boast. Deep, caving, red canyons washed by the river floods cut their way through the bluffs leaving high ridges like huge back bones which ran out for miles to melt away far inland into broad arable tablelands. Although its lavishness has dwindled much of the former beauty of the country still remains.

It was a picturesque and delightful prospect that from day to day greeted the young child's eye as she grew to womanhood, and imagination does not have to play a difficult part in depicting the scenes in which she was one of the central figures in many a feat of childhood. The lavish forest growth about her home, the great river with its vast waters flowing at her very feet and the high pitched, pleasant city whose tall white towers and spires beckoned to both school

[1] Conversations with descendants of contemporaries.

and church made early impressions upon her mind that tended towards lasting beauty of mind and spirit. Much of this stayed in her thought and conversation through life. If, with all the tragedy and humiliation that darkened her days, harmony never fled its temple in her soul it was doubtless, to some extent at least, because of the placid and exquisite beauty of her early environment which so deeply impressed her, so much as to help color her inner life. And there were no pale nor nondescript tones in either its warp or its woof.

The child, held in the arms of its devoted black nurse and clad in a long embroidered white robe which barely escaped the floor, was christened at Old Trinity Episcopal Church amid an admiring company of sponsors and friends.[1] This event over, she soon became known for a number of years merely as one of the pretty Howell children. With her brother Joe she played constantly in the dry bayous near the river, the glistening brown coat of pine needles and magnolia leaves, making clean carpets on which to sit and slide about. Being of a fearless, sportive nature she says that she was soon recognized as one of the ringleaders of the group that regularly gathered for play at "The Briers." She laughingly told a friend in after years that she was sometimes called a "Tom boy"[2] by her family especially when guilty of some daring feat such as rolling down a steep canyon or turning somersaults on the dry bottom below. From all the author has been able to gather of this period of her life it is safe to say that she was a healthy child with a happy outlook.

[1] She was in all probability christened by Rev. Albert H. Muller, who was still Rector of Old Trinity Church at that time. The present Church stands on the old site in the city of Natchez.

[2] A colloquialism of that day used to twit and reproach girl children who excelled in boyish sports.

CHAPTER IV

EARLY ENVIRONMENT

THAT the environment and influences that surrounded and touched the life of Varina Howell during her childhood may be understood by the reader and especially by those among them who make much of such things in the development and formation of character, excerpts from a diary, "The Southwest by a Yankee" covering this period will be reproduced in this volume.[1] To insure the reader that no lapse into legend nor color of tradition, so natural to an author describing his own section, are employed in the description of the country at this time, much of the literal composition of the diary is given.

First of all, the new country caught the traveler's eye and held his rapt attention. As he came up the river from New Orleans he was "overwhelmed" at times with the "deep and somber sublimity" of the stream. With the exception of Ellis Cliffs below Natchez which rise sheer a hundred and fifty feet above the water, presenting the most irregular and picturesque scenery along the river, the dark and heavily moss-draped forest in many places made a "dreary prospect," becoming at times "very monotonous." Of his impressions on nearing the city he wrote: "We are now within twenty

[1] The author of "The Southwest by a Yankee," J. H. Ingraham, was a New England school teacher, a native of Portland, Maine, possessing much literary talent and seeking occupation in the South along with such New Englanders as S. S. Prentis, John A. Quitman, Judge George Winchester and many others who became famous in the land of their adoption.

miles of Natchez!" . . . . "The loud and startling report of a cannon in the bows of the boat, making her stagger and tremble through every beam, is the signal that our port is in sight—a pile of gray and white cliffs with here and there a church steeple, a roof elevated above its summit, and a light-house hanging on the verge."

As the author approached the little city he was evidently enchanted with the prospect that greeted him. The vast waters, gray and rose colored palisades, and white towers rising out of the heavy evergreen forests must have charmed both eye and fancy, since he quoted on the first leaf of his diary from Rogers' Italy:

> "Where on my way I went
> A pilgrim from the North,
> Now more and more attracted as I drew
> Nearer and nearer."

In further description of the rather ancient little city as American time is reckoned he wrote: "At the foot of the bluffs are long, straggling lines of wooden buildings, principally stores and storehouse; the levee is fringed with flatboats and steamers, and above all, tower majestically the masts of two or three ships. The whole prospect from the deck presents an interesting scene of commercial life and bustle. But this is not Natchez! The city proper is built upon the summit level, the tops of whose buildings and trees can be seen from the river, rising higher than the cliff. The ascent from the lower town, or as it is commonly designated, 'Natchez under the hill,' is by an excavated road, of moderate elevation. The whole appearance of the place from the deck is highly romantic. On our right, a few hundred yards below Natchez, crowning a noble eminence, stand the ruins

of Fort Rosalie, celebrated in the early history of this country. Its garrison early in the last century was massacred by the Natchez tribe of Indians." . . . "Here is the principal scene of Chateaubriand's celebrated romance."[1] "The position of the fort, in a military point of view, commanding, as it does, a great extent of the river, is well chosen." "Beyond the fort, a peep at rich woods, green hills, and tasteful country-seats, is agreeably refreshing to the eye, so long accustomed to gaze upon melancholy forests, and dead flats covered with cane-brakes." . . . "On arriving at the summit of the hill, I delayed a moment, for the double purpose of taking breath and surveying the scene spread around me. Beneath lay the roofs of warehouses, stores, and dwellings, scattered over a flat, sandy surface, which was bordered on the water side by hundreds of up-country flatboats, laden with the produce of the rich farming states bordering the Ohio and 'Upper Mississippi.' Lower down, steamers were taking on and discharging freght; while the mingled sounds of the busy multitude rose like the hum of a hive upon the ear. Immediately opposite me lay two ships, which, with their towering masts, gay flags and dark hulls, agreeably relieved the otherwise long and unbroken line of boats. To the north the river spreads its noble bosom till lost in the distance; while the continuous line of cliffs, extend along its shore like a giant wall." . . . "To the south, the view is confined to the near projection of the obtruding cliffs. Yet the river stretches boldly out many miles on its course toward the sea, till lost to sight within the bosom of the distant forests which bound the southern horizon. To the west, the eye travels over the majestic breadth of the river, here a mile wide, and rests for a moment upon level

[1] Atala a Southwestern romance.

and richly cultivated fields beyond, a quiet village[1] and noble forests, which spread away to the west like a vast sea of waving foliage, till they blend with the bending sky, forming a level and unbroken horizon. Turning from this scene of grandeur and beauty to the east, Natchez, mantled with rich green foliage like a garment, with its handsome structures and fine avenues, here a dome and there a tower, lies immediately before me. It is the very contrast to its straggling namesake below."[2] . . . "The city proper" the delightful narrative continues, "consists of six streets, at right angles with the river, intersected by seven others of the same length, parallel with the stream. The front, or first parallel street, is laid out about one hundred yards back from the verge of the bluff, leaving a noble green esplanade along the front of the city, which not only adds to its beauty, but is highly useful as a promenade and parade ground. Shade trees are planted along the border, near the verge of the precipice, beneath which are placed benches for the comfort of the lounger. From this place the eye commands one of the most extensive prospects to be found on the Mississippi. To a spectator, standing in the center of this broad, natural terrace, the symmetrical arrangement of the artificial scenery around him is highly picturesque and pleasing. On his right, to the south, a noble colonnaded structure, whose heavy appearance is gracefully relieved by shrubbery, parterres, and a light latticed summerhouse, crowning a gentle eminence in the rear, and half suspended over the precipice, strikes his eye with a fine effect." . . . . "On the left, at the northern extremity of the esplanade, upon the beautiful eminence, gradu-

[1] Vidalia.

[2] An old portion of the town called "Natchez Under the Hill" and bearing a reputation something similar to the famous Five Points in New York City.

ally yet roundly swelling away from the promenade, stands another private residence, nearly resembling and directly opposite to the other, its lofty colonnades glancing in the sun—a magnificent garden spreading out around it, luxuriant with foliage—diversified with avenues and terraces, and adorned with grottoes and summer-houses. Imagine these handsome residences, flanking the city, and forming the extreme northern and southern terminations of the broad terrace before the town, with the mighty flood of the Mississippi rolling some hundred feet beneath you—the dark forests of Louisiana stretching away to infinity in the west, with Natchez—its streets alive with promenaders, gay equipages and horsemen—immediately before you, and you will form some idea of this beautiful city and its environs from this point." . . . . "Crossing a bridge," the tourist continues, "I entered at once into the body of the city, which is built as compactly within itself and aloof from suburbs as though it were separated from them by a wall; and in a few moments, after traversing two sides of a well-built square on fine side walks, I arrived at the 'Mansion house,' an extensive and commodious brick edifice said to be one of the finest hotels in the Southwest except Bishop's, agreeably impressed with this, my first *coup d'oeil* of a city, so extensively celebrated for opulence, taste and hospitality of its inhabitants." . . . "The principal street is the 'Broadway' of Natchez. It extends from the river to the eastern extremity of the city, about half a mile in length, dividing the town into nearly equal portions, north and south. This street is to Natchez what Chartres street is to New Orleans, though on a smaller scale." . . . . "In passing up this street, which is compactly built with handsome brick blocks, generally but two stories in height, the stranger is struck with the extraordinary number of private carriages,

clustered before the doors of the fashionable stores, or millineries, rolling through the streets, or crossing and re-crossing it from those by which it is intersected, nearly every moment, from eleven till two on each fair day." . . . . "They are from the plantations in the neighborhood, which spread out from the town over richly cultivated 'hill and dale,'—a pleasant and fertile landscape—far into the interior." . . . . "The moving galaxy of grace and beauty that floats down Chestnut street cannot at any time present more fashionable and elegantly-dressed promenaders than now enliven the street, or than that fair bevy of young ladies clustered round yonder carriage door, all chattering together, with their sweet pleasant voices, to a pale, beautiful, and interesting girl within, apparently an invalid. So far as I can judge, as much of 'the ton' in dress and society, prevails here as in Philadelphia, where many residents of the city and country spend a portion of every summer."[1] . . . "The gentlemen of Natchez are less particular in their dress." . . . "They dress well and richly, but seldom fashionably. Their garments hang upon them loosely, as though made for larger men; and they wear them with a sort of free and easy air, enviable and inimitable by the stiffer and more formal Northerner. The Southerner, particularly the planter, would wear with a native and matchless grace the flowing toga of imperial Rome. Though destitute of that fashionable exterior which the tailor supplies, and for which, in general, they have a most sovereign indifference and contempt, they possess—I mean the genuine, native-born, well-educated Southerner—an *'air distingue,'* and in the highest degree aristocratic, which is every where the most striking feature of their appearance." . . . . "That knot of gentlemen issuing from a

[1] Philadelphia, Pa.

plain brick building—one of the banks—is composed of bank directors. Their decisions have elevated or depressed the mercury in many an anxious breast. Two or three faces resemble those one often sees in Wall-street, or on Change, in Boston. The resemblance is so striking that one is quite sure at the first glance that he has seen them there. But no; they are merchants of this city—thorough-going commercial men. The resemblance is only that of species. Merchants resemble each other everywhere. Their features are strongly marked and characteristic." . . . "At the north few ride except in gigs. But here all are horsemen; and it is unusual to see a gentleman in a gig or carriage. If his wife rides, he attends her *à cheval*. Instead of gigs, therefore, which would fill the streets of a Northern town, saddle-horses, usually with high pummelled Spanish saddles, and numerous private carriages, in which are the ladies of the family, drawn by long-tailed horses, throng the streets and line the outside of the pave."

Describing one of the public buildings of the city the author says: "It has been erected very recently, presenting a noble colonnaded front, of the modernized Grecian style; being built somewhat after the model of the United States bank of Philadelphia; though brick and stucco are here substituted for marble, and heavy pillars for the graceful column. It is entered from the street by a broad and spacious flight of steps, leading to its lofty portico, from which three large doors give admission into its vast hall, decidedly the finest room south or west of Washington. The whole structure is a chaste and beautiful specimen of architecture. It is partially enclosed by a light, iron railing. To a stranger this edifice is a striking object, and, contrasted with the buildings of less pretention around it, will call forth his warmest

admiration." . . . . "The first story of the building is used as an academy of the principal educational institution of the city. It is a well-conducted institution, and its pupils are thoroughly instructed by competent officers, who are graduates of northern colleges, as are most of the public and private instructors of this state. The number of students is generally large. Those who are destined for professional life, after completing their preparatory course here, usually enter some one of the colleges at the North. Yale, Princeton, and Harvard annually receive several from this state; either from this academy or from under the hands of the private tutors, who are dispersed throughout the state, and from a great majority of the planters' sons receive their preparatory education. I could not pass by this institution, which reflects so much honor upon the city, without expressing my gratification at its flourishing condition and high character. To see here an institution that cannot be surpassed by any of the same rank in other states, must not only be pleasing to the friends of education, but particularly so to the citizens of this state, to whom it is ably demonstrated, by the success of this academy, that literature is not an exotic, though its germs may heretofore have been transplanted from another soil. There is a female seminary also in the city, which, though of a very respectful character, is not so celebrated and flourishing as many others in the state.

"On the south side of the next square is an old 'burying-ground.'[1] crowning an eminence whose surface is covered with fragments of grave-stones and dismantled tombs. The street is excavated through it to its base, leaving a wall or

[1] Colonial burying-ground during English and later Spanish, occupancy, 1763-1798.

bank of earth nearly thirty feet in height upon the verge of which crumbling tombs are suspended, threatening to fall upon the passenger beneath. It has not been used for many years as a place of burial; the present cemetery being about a mile above the city, in a delightful spot among the green hills which cluster along the banks of the river. Adjoining it, on the eastern side, and nearly at the extremity of the street and also of the city, stands the theatre; a large, commodious building, constructed of brick, with arched entrances and perfectly plain exterior. Its interior, however, is well arranged, convenient, and handsomely painted and decorated. Its boards are supplied, for two or three months during every season, by performers from New Orleans or New York." . . . "Fine roads extend into the country—one to Washington, a pleasant village six miles distant, formerly the seat of government of the territory and the location of the public offices; but now a retired, unassuming, and rural spot, boasting of a well-endowed college and female seminary.[1] Of the other public buildings of Natchez, the Presbyterian church is the finest and most imposing. It stands on a commanding site, overlooking the public square, a pleasant green flat, in the center of which is the court-house. It is constructed of bricks, which are allowed to retain their original colour; and surrounded by buff-colored pilasters of stucco work, which is here generally substituted for granite in facings. It is surmounted, at the west end, by a fine tower of successive stories; on one side of which is a clock, conspicuous from the most distant parts of the city and suburbs. You are aware, probably, that there are in this country no Congrega-

[1] Elizabeth College, said to be the first in the United States to give degrees; established in 1816.

tionalists, so called; Presbyterians supply the place of this denomination in the ecclesiastical society of all the south and west. The prevailing denomination, however, in this state, as in all this section of the United States, is that of Methodists, which embraces men of all classes, including a large proportion of planters. I now merely allude to this and other subjects of the kind, as I intend, in subsequent letters, to treat of them more at large.

"The court-house is a fine, large, square building, opposite to the church, surmounted by a cupola. It is surrounded by a beautiful, though not spacious, green. On the streets which bound the four sides of it are situated the lawyers' and public offices, which are generally plain, neat frame buildings, from one to two stories in height. Should they be denominated from the state of those who occupy them, they would be correctly designated 'bachelors' halls.' Shade trees half embower them and the court-house in their rich foliage. Opposite to the south side of the square is the county prison; a handsome two story brick building, resembling, save in its grated tier of windows in the upper story, a gentleman's private dwelling. There is a fine Episcopalian church in the southeast part of the town, adding much to its beauty. It is built of brick, and surmounted by a vast dome, which has a rather heavy, overgrown appearance, and is evidently too large for the building. It has a neat front, adorned with a portico of the usual brick pillars. There are not so many Episcopalians here; but the few who are of this denomination are, as every where else in the United States, generally of the wealthy and educated class. There is also a Methodist church adjoining the Masonic hall; a plain, neat building, remarkable only for its unassuming simplicity, like all others of this denomination in America.

"The light-house upon the bluffs, at the northwest corner of the city, is well deserving of notice, though not properly ranked under the public buildings of Natchez. It is a simple tower, about forty feet in height, commanding a section of the river, north and south, of about twelve miles. But the natural inquiry of the stranger is, 'What is its use.' A light-house on a river bank, three hundred miles from the sea, has certainly no place in theory of the utilitarian." . . . "The hotels are very fine. Parker's, on one of the front squares, near the bluff, is a handsome, costly, and very extensive building, three stories in height, with a stuccoed front, in imitation of granite, and decidedly the largest edifice in the city. Its rooms are large, spacious, and elegantly furnished; suited rather for gentlemen and their families, who choose a temporary residence in town, than for transient travelers and single men, who more frequently resort to the 'Mansion-house.'" . . . "There is another very good hotel here, equivalent to Richardson's in New Orleans, or the Elm-street in Boston, where the country people usually put up when they come in from the distant counties to dispose of their cotton. It fronts on 'Cotton-square,' as a triangular area formed by clipping off a corner of one of the city squares, is termed; which is filled every day, during the months of November, December, and January, with huge teams loaded with cotton bales, for which this is the peculiar market place." . . . . "Until within a very short period, the society of Natchez has exhibited one peculiar characteristic, in the estimation of a Northerner, in whose migrating land 'seven women,' literally fulfilling the prediction, 'take hold of one man;' a prediction which has, moreover, been fulfilled, according to the redoubtable and most classical Crockett, in the west; but by no means in this place, or in any of the embryo cities, which

are springing up like Jonah's guard, along the banks of the great 'Father of Waters.' The predominance of male population in the countless villages that are dotting the great western valley, rising up amidst the forests, one after another, as stars come out at evening, and almost in as rapid succession, is a necessary consequence of the natural laws of migration. In the old Atlantic and New England states, the sons, as they successively grow up to manhood, take the paternal blessing and their little patrimony, often all easily packed and carried in a knapsack, but oftener in their heads, and bend their way to the 'great Southwest,' to seek their fortunes." . . . "But a short time since, there were not three married men to ten unmarried. The latter predominating, gave the tone to society, which was, as I have before observed, that of a university, so far as habits and manners were concerned. And the resemblance was still greater, as a large majority of the young men were graduates of Northern seminaries, or well informed young merchants." . . . . "The society of Natchez, now, is not surpassed by any in America. Originally, and therein differing from most western cities, composed of intelligent and well-educated young men, assembled from every Atlantic state, but principally from New England and Virginia, it has advanced in a degree proportionate to its native powers. English and Irish gentlemen of family and fortune have here sought and found a home—while the *gentilhomme* of sunny France, and the dark-browed don of 'Old Castile,' dwell upon the green hills that receded gently undulating from the city.

"The citizens of Natchez are, however, so inseparably connected with the neighboring planters, that these last are necessarily included in the general term 'society of Natchez.' The two bodies united may successfully challenge any other

community to produce a more intelligent, wealthy, and, I may say, *aristocratic* whole. But I do not much like the term applied to Americans; though no other word will express so clearly that refinement and elegance to which I allude, and which everywhere indicate the opulence and high breeding of their possessors."

Of the slave population the following is pertinent: "The female slaves very generally attend church in this country; but whether to display their tawdry finery, of which they are fond, or for a better purpose, I will not undertake to determine. The males prefer collecting in little knots in the streets, where, imitating the manners, bearing, and language of their masters, they converse with grave faces and in pompous language, selecting hard, high-sounding words, which are almost universally misapplied, and distorted, from their original sound as well as sense to a most ridiculous degree—astounding their gaping auditors 'ob de field nigger class,' who cannot boast of such enviable accomplishments." Of a pleasant sabbath day the author continues in happy vein: "My reverie of the past, however, was soon interrupted by rattling of carriages, as they rolled over the noble esplanade between me and the city, from the roads which extend north and south along the banks of the river, on their way to church. I prepared to follow their example. From my position I could look into one of the principal streets of the town, now rapidly filling with well-dressed people, numerous private equipages, and horsemen in great numbers. I soon fell in with the living current, and in a few minutes arrived at the Presbyterian church, situated in the center and highest part of the city. The approach was literally blockaded by carriages from the suburbs and neighboring plantations. As I delayed for a minute under the portico of the church, after the services

were over, watching, with a stranger's eye, the members of the congregation as they issued from the church and filed off through the several streets to their residences, I felt that I had not, since leaving New England, beheld a scene which reminded me so forcibly and pleasantly of home." . . . "The majority of the ministers of this state are graduates of Princeton college. They form, as do the educated clergy every where, a class of well-informed, intelligent men." Of the Episcopal Church where the Howells worshipped, Varina being then about five years of age, the writer records, "I attended worship here the last Sabbath. The house was fashionably but thinly filled. The pulpit, which is a miniature forum, is chaste and elegant, and its drapery rich and tastefully arranged. The choir was full and powerful, whose effect was increased by a fine-toned organ. The eloquence of the speaker was engaging, mild, and gentlemanly. The latter term is very expressive of his manner, and conciliating pulpit address. Though not striking as an orator, his thoughts were just and pertinent." Of the military protection of the city the author wrote: "The Fencibles—a volunteer military corps in Natchez, composed of the first young gentlemen of the city, and now commanded by the late Chancellor of the State[1]—is the best disciplined and finest looking body of men west of the Alleghanies, these constitute the military police of the city. They are also the 'firemen;' and a more efficient phalanx to battle with a conflagration cannot be found, even in New York or Boston. Patrols go out merely to preserve the peace of the neighborhood from any disturbance from drunken negroes, rather than guard against insurrectionary movements."[2]

[1] General John A. Quitman.

[2] While laws concerning slaves were rigid, they were in reality allowed much personal freedom including the right to drink intoxicants and gather in groups.

Here, in one of the fairest sections of the Republic, slavery had been established on an extensive scale; not even Virginia nor South Carolina, the mother-lands of the institution, surpassed it in teeming numbers, and it would not be a complete picture of Varina Howell's birthplace unless a candid impression of the institution which played such a prominent part in her history was given along with that of the city and country. Opposed to the institution himself and seeing in the system conditions that would, he believed pass away naturally in the evolution of society, the author, sends the following views of it to his Northern publishers: "The more I see of slavery, the more firmly I am convinced that the interference of our Northern friends in the present state of their information upon the subject, will be more injurious than beneficial to the cause. The physician, like Prince Hohenloe, might as reasonably be expected to heal, with the Atlantic between himself and his patient's pulse." With a deep insight he continues to warn his Northern readers of the danger of interfering with the institution in the first stages of the negro's civilization.

It was in the environment and amid the surroundings pictured in the foregoing observations by a New England student of social conditions in the South that Varina Howell spent her childhood and young girlhood. Though only eighteen years of age when she left it, much of that time having been spent in quiet study under a private tutor, Judge George Winchester, a graduate of Harvard, with two terms at a school for young ladies in Philadelphia, it is obvious that she carried through life a certain grace and *savoir faire*

peculiar to this lordly ruling class in so many instances the pick and flower of older communities.[1]

[1] Among these could be found the names of Sargent, Claiborne, Howell, Coulson, Barfield, Quitman, Prentiss, Minor, Lovel, Wilkins, Poindexter, Leake, Brandon and others, too numerous to mention, who composed the haughty ruling class of the Natchez country. The Dwights, and Lymans, of New England, Hutchins of South Carolina, and Marston Greens of Virginia were of an older emigration and had laid the foundation for the opulent cultured community pictured by J. H. Ingraham in the present chapter.

CHAPTER V

GIRLHOOD

The Howell children knew little personally of their grandfather Kempe who died during their early childhood, but much had been told them by their elders, and from these, especially from their grandmother, they heard many stories of his chivalrous conduct and patriotism, stories in which the names of Andrew Jackson and Thomas Hinds, the latter the commander of Jackson's Cavalry at the Battle of New Orleans, were frequently mentioned. Their grandmother Kempe lived awhile after her husband's death at her country place "Kempton"[1] but later lived with the Howell family and it was from her that they also had voluminous reminiscences of Prince William County, Virginia, where the Grahams, she emphasized were considered one of the "first families," with a lineage book and a coat of arms. These were accessories that the pioneer folk in the far South, rich in land and slaves, though they referred to such with some pride, in reality thought little about.

During her young girlhood Varina's time was, as was that of the young daughters generally of the rich planters, taken up to a large extent with books and young companions. At an early age she developed a decided taste for study, especially reading, and as a child read such newspapers as the National Intelligencer. It is not known if she ever attended

[1] Every home of any importance in that particular river region was given some special name.

the city schools of Natchez to any extent but the fact that a number of young girls of that period were her school mates is proof that she did.[1] She was for a period of twelve years as has been stated given private instruction by Judge George Winchester of Salem, Massachusetts, a learned jurist who had located in the city, "reading hard," she records to finish her course in the classics during her sixteenth and seventeenth year. Judge Winchester, had on coming to the country formed a warm friendship for the Howells and was deeply attached to his young pupil. Of all her instructors it was of him, to whom she had given the name of "Great Heart," that she most frequently spoke in after years.[2]

At that period, in the far South at least, young women at the age of seventeen or eighteen were considered old enough to take their place with their elders in society and to receive attention from the other sex, the particular sign for it being that of putting on long dresses and in local phrase "doing up the hair." When Varina was nearing that age her mother consented for her to pay a long-promised visit to the family of Joseph E. Davis, then master of "The Hurricane" planatation in Warren County. Joseph Davis had visited the Howells the year before for the purpose of inducing them to send her to him for a visit, but the mother thought her daughter rather young to enter society at that time and kept her in school a while longer, at Madame Greenland's School in Philadelphia the fall and winter term, and during the spring and summer months under Judge Winchester.

The time, however, came when the old friend's urgent request could no longer be refused by the parents and

[1] Mrs. Coulson, *nee* Barfield, was a school mate of Varina Howell.

[2] Judge George Winchester settled in Natchez about 1820. He was among the most learned jurists of the State. He never married. He died in 1851.

the young daughter, who had grown into a beautiful and graceful young woman possessing the charms usual to youth in addition to culture and refinement, was at the end of her seventeenth year permitted to join a house party at "The Hurricane" for the Christmas holidays. She, though speaking of herself as "a little miss," a habit sometimes of Southern women when referring to themselves before they had quite reached young ladyhood, was in fact a handsome, well-proportioned young woman of more than average size. Of the brunette type, an inheritance from the Kempes—her dark eyes and hair gathered additional depth in contrast with the rich creamy complexion. Her features for the most part regular were softly curved, and here and there upon both cheek and brow a delicate blue vein could be traced. Her full, red lips, beautiful teeth, and the faint peach bloom of her cheeks which deepened into rose with laughter and emotion, were good points constantly dwelt upon by her friends.[1] Critics in after years said that her lips had a set, haughty line about them, though eye-witnesses deny it, and the fact that she had full, softly curved lips as all her portraits show is proof that this criticism had little foundation. However, Varina Howell, at that day, was for the most part accustomed to hear only praise of herself. With a far more than usual share of beauty, she possessed a graceful bearing carrying her head with an air that barely escaped hauteur in later years,

[1] As Varina Howell was described to the author by Mrs. Harriet B. Kells, whose mother was one of Miss Howell's girlhood associates. Mrs. Kells—*nee* Coulson, was one of the most prominent leaders of the Prohibition movement in the South. She was born at Natchez. As an elderly woman she spent several winters in the author's home. From her was gathered many items concerning the Howell family in Natchez. Her mother was a Miss Barfield, two of the Barfield sisters having married Coulsons. Other reminiscences of the Howells come to the author from Miss Alice Lovell, a descendant of families who were contemporaries of the Howells.

and this manner may have furnished some reason for the criticism.

Louisa Howell it is said was as ambitious as is the usual mother for her young daughter, and with the help of several seamstresses and maids worked eagerly to get her ready for the Christmas visit. No less a person than the devoted tutor, Judge Winchester, had been selected to escort the youthful Varina to "The Hurricane." Nothing could have pleased the faithful teacher better. Had he not taught her for a decade or more and was she not the most promising of any of her sex that he had ever known he often told himself. It was with a pardonable pride in his own good work that he looked his young pupil over, now with lengthened skirts and fashionably combed hair, on the morning they set off for the Davis Bend plantations.

They were to go by boat and selected for the trip a palatial steamboat, the *Magnolia*, one of the best equipped of the transportation lines at that time. They could have taken another route, going to Vicksburg and returning in a carriage down the River, but a trip on the steamboat was a pleasant, picturesque mode of travel on the Mississippi at that time. No one could have looked forward with more eagerness to its varied pleasures than Varina. Feeling safe in her tutor's care, almost jealous in its concern, she gave herself up freely to the enjoyment of her surroundings. Referring to the pleasant one day trip many years later, she wrote: "The steamboats at that time were literally floating palaces of ease and luxury. They were much larger then than now, and I have never seen any hotel where the food was so exquisitely prepared or the provision of dainties so great. Fresh fruits and the most beautiful flowers were sent to the captain at almost every stopping-place by the planters

and their families, to whom 'the boat' meant ice, new books, and every other luxury New Orleans could furnish or their purses command. A journey on one of these packets was an ideal mode of travel."

Just how the tutor regarded his young pupil has been a matter of conjecture. He was a bachelor, in the prime of life and a man of unusual attainments. If any feeling other than that of a devoted preceptor was entertained Varina herself was never aware of it. "I hope I may be excused" she wrote much as a daughter would do, "for paying here a passing tribute to Judge Winchester, a saintly man, to whom I owe the little learning I have acquired, and also the realization of my childish ideal of 'Great-heart.'[1] He was an eminent lawyer, an incorruptible jurist, a strong thinker, and a devoted, self-sacrificing, faithful friend. His charity was as wide as his horizon. He taught me for twelve years gratuitously, and in the hard methods that a learned man is apt to adopt who has no experience in the art of pedagogics. During that period the most valuable lessons I learned were not from Latin or English classics—in the former of which he was a proficient scholar, and remembered them well because he loved them but from the pure, high standard of right of which his course was the exemplar. His politics, like my father's, were what was then called Whig, as, indeed, were those of most of the gentlefolk of Natchez."

It had been arranged that Varina and Judge Winchester should first pay a visit to Mrs. David McCaleb, the eldest daughter of Mr. Joseph E. Davis, at her home, "Diamond Place," thirteen miles north of "The Hurricane." Mrs. McCaleb, little more than a girl herself, had made many preparations for the reception of her guests. The house was

[1] The name she frequently gave him in conversation.

made festive for the occasion with holly and mistletoe—rich specimens of which grew in abundance along the river and were used extensively for decorating the country homes at this season. Both pantry and side boards were stocked with plum pudding and peach brandy, Christmas offerings dear to the heart of the wives of the wealthy planter folk.

It turned out that the young hostess was not to have her guests to herself but for a brief time. Judge Winchester returned to Natchez the next day, bidding his young pupil good bye, and cautioning her not to fall in love before she came home.

It was but a few days before the Christmas holidays had set in when Mr. Joseph Davis, decided that the long looked for guest from Natchez should spend these at "The Hurricane." Preparations there on a large scale had been going forward for several weeks for the occasion, in keeping with the open-house hospitality that characterized the rich planters of the river region. The Davis kin were numerous and all were expected to gather at the home of Mr. Joseph Davis for the Christmas season. The preparations, though these were lavish in the extreme, were made in a natural, easy style that fitted the bluff democracy of the master. New Orleans had furnished its best for the occasion; its profusion, however, it has been said by contemporaries, barely escaped what the more aristocratic termed, "on the big order."

Varina was still at the McCaleb home, and although many pleasant surprises greeted her at every turn in the pretty, well kept country house of her hostess, she was scarcely prepared for the sudden coming from "The Hurricane" one morning of a handsome and distinguished-looking man on horseback. She could but see that there was an unusual

stir and commotion on his arrival, and was somewhat puzzled on being told that it was Mr. Jefferson Davis, a younger brother of Mr. Joseph Davis. Although her parents knew of the younger brother and in a general way of his promising career, it had never reached the daughter's ears, or, if so, had never impressed her, more concerned with her books or else the happenings in her youthful set at Natchez. Her interest in him was heightened when she learned that he had ridden by "Diamond Place" on his way to attend a political meeting at Vicksburg to bear her a message that she was expected at "The Hurricane" on the morrow.[1] This was all, with nothing more than a casual and polite glance while the message was being delivered.

When the brief call was over and he had ridden away, Mrs. McCaleb, with pride that can be easily pardoned, dilated upon his many fine qualities. Still it was with a sense of mystery that Varina wrote her mother—and the famous letter, so often quoted and variously interpreted by historians, giving her first impressions of him clearly shows that her curiosity and interest, even at that time, were aroused, unconcerned as she strove to be—"Today, Uncle Joe sent by his younger brother (did you know he had one?) an urgent invitation to me to go at once to 'The Hurricane.' I do not know whether this Mr. Jefferson Davis is young or old. He looks both at times; but I believe he is old for from what I hear is only two years younger than you are.[2] He impresses me as a remarkable kind of man but of uncertain temper and has a way of taking for granted that everybody agrees with

[1] Girlhood confidences, *A Memoir,* Vol. I.

[2] At that period in the South a woman in the prime of life was considered as old.

him when he expresses an opinion which offends me,[1] yet he is most agreeable and has a peculiarly sweet voice and a winning manner of asserting himself. In fact he is the kind of person I should expect to rescue one from a mad dog at any risk but to insist upon a stoical indifference to the fright afterward. I do not think I shall ever like him as I do his brother Joe. Would you believe it, he is refined and cultivated and yet he is a Democrat!"

The last discovery, and one would judge from her letter that she had studied him closely, was the most puzzling of all. Knowing as she did that what was termed the aristocracy of the Natchez region was of the political party of Whigs, she was astonished that a man so distinguished looking in appearance and manner was not of that particular party. The Democratic party, then strengthening itself yearly in Mississippi, was regarded much in the light as was the Populist of recent years. The Whig Party included all or nearly all the gentlefolk; these read the *National Intelligencer*, a strong paper edited by Messrs. Gales and Seton, pronounced Federalists and noted for their sincerity of purpose. Bitterly opposed to Martin Van Buren and the Democratic Party, these lost no opportunity of denouncing and condemning both, and the Howell children had listened to Whig expletives and anathemas since childhood, many being reserved for Andrew Jackson to whom they attributed much of the evil of present conditions. To the young Varina, although interested as yet but vaguely in the handsome, distinguished visitor to the McCaleb home, it was

[1] This early opinion loses some of the significance that so many historians have attached to it in view of the fact that she made an almost similar observation of John C. Calhoun. See her early impression of him in which she says of his speech at Vicksburg, "Taking it for granted that we were to sail with him." *A Memoir*, Vol. I.

hardly believable when told that he was not a Whig. She who had been taught that all *nice* people were Whigs felt deeply chagrined that the handsomest man she had ever seen and one both cultivated and polished was a "despised Democrat." Her discovery, much to their amusement, was half suspected by the Davis family and some teasing of the naive young guest was indulged in by its various members. Bred up in this school of political faith, they realized that she was at a loss to know how her parents' best friends could be so opposed to the views held by the editors of the *National Intelligencer*. Nor were these any new lights in which the despicable party was regarded, but had, through the years, descended to the Whigs from the days when Lady Washington herself was wont to exclaim in disgust, "The filthy Democrats!" And whatever that lady condemned was still, today, abhorrent to the proud Whig ladies of Natchez. Andrew Jackson, as popular as he had been in the Natchez District, had never gained control of the Whigs who, under the leadership of Judge Winchester and the brilliant young Prentiss, were seeking to hold their own in the Southern country.

CHAPTER VI

AT "THE HURRICANE"

Joseph E. Davis, master of "The Hurricane," was a man of much sociability and open hearted hospitality and usually kept a houseful of his relatives about him, especially the younger members of his large connection. The next morning after Jefferson Davis had called at "Diamond Place" his niece Miss Mary Bradford, who was spending the winter at the famous country seat, rode over on horseback with a man servant for the purpose of bringing Miss Howell home with her.[1] The servant led a fine, high-stepping animal—one of the best saddlers in the far-famed Davis stables, equipped with a side-saddle and riding habit. The prospect of a fine canter on the clear, crisp, winter morning was a delightful one to the youthful Varina, who with the young ladies of Natchez had been early taught to ride, an accomplishment that even at that day was believed to be a healthful form of exercise but for the most part not considered necessary for women. In addition to the saddle-horses the family carriage drawn by a pair of bays was sent to bring her boxes and various bags and "all in blue, unclouded weather" she wrote many years later "we rode over the rustling leaves through the thick trees to 'The Hurricane.' "[2]

It is not verified by a single hint nor utterance preserved in any reminiscence, either in verbal or record form, of any

[1] Miss Bradford became Mrs. Richard Brodhead of Pennsylvania.
[2] *A Memoir,* Vol. I.

of the parties concerned, that there had been a premeditated plan on the part of any one for the meeting of Varina Howell and Jefferson Davis. All of the circumstances, however, point to the fact that at least the shrewd, elder brother Joseph was not without some design in bringing the lovely young Varina to "The Hurricane" for the Christmas holidays. His young brother Jefferson after a long seclusion on his lonely "Brierfield" plantation covering a period of eight years following the death of his young wife, Sarah Knox Taylor, was now being sought by the Democracy of the State to take part in its future destinies, and the elder brother was keenly interested in every matter that in any way affected his future career.[1] "Any man was better off married than not" was a common saying of the day, and especially if he were an aspirant for public favor. To Joseph Davis a family alliance with the House of Howell seemed about the most fortunate thing that could happen to a young man either for the success of his private or his public life, and it is safe to say that he looked on—if he did not set them in motion, with much secret satisfaction at the turn affairs were taking in the lives of the two young people, both of whom were very dear to him. From her infancy Varina had been taught to love and revere him. To her he was "Uncle Joe Davis," and it was with something of a niece's affection that she had come to regard him. Though not visiting them as frequently as he had done in former days, the care of his large plantations growing heavier each year, he still paid them

[1] In this biography of Varina Howell it is not the intention of the author to give a full history of Jefferson Davis' career only as it touched and affected hers. The task of including the history of both would be far beyond the scope of the present undertaking though necessarily any biography of her life must treat largely of public events. For this reason an historical outline of his public service has been carefully included.

occasional visits at Natchez, and the coming of "Uncle Joe" was always regarded as a pleasant event in the Howell family. Bluff, hearty and kindly and more alive to material success and its aims and objects than his younger brother Jefferson he was a favorite with all classes. Being a man of considerable education of both a legal and political nature, somewhat domineering, and some thought a degree tyrannical, he wielded a wide influence in the section of the State in which he lived, the owner of an immense property in land and slaves. Keenly alive to all public affairs and noting the growing interest in them on the part of his brother Jefferson he not only encouraged it, but it was his express desire and wish that he should enter political life. The brothers lived on adjoining plantations and a constant intercourse was kept up through the eight years of Jefferson's retirement on his Brierfield place. The latter it is stated by local contemporaries was indifferent to the public during these years, finding an outlet for the expression of his views upon public matters and questions in the company of his brother. It was at this period of his life that he found time to add largely to an educatonal equipment which had already been very liberally acquired in various schools and colleges of Kentucky and at West Point. More than his Kentucky birth his Kentucky education had given him a certain culture that insured polite usage. In manner he was to a noticeable extent of the Breckenridge type, a type that yielded the graces and courtesies of life to no section of the Union. It is something more than a speculation to say that had Lincoln received his education in the State of his birth Mrs. Lincoln would never have had to remind him not to answer the door bell at the White House.

While a partial recluse on his plantation, the cultivation of

which seemed to give him intense pleasure, Jefferson Davis engaged in an extensive course of reading which embraced much classical literature, the rich harvest of which was stored for later uses.

The plantation life of the Davis brothers, their love of the soil, fondness for country life, agricultural pursuits and the government of their slaves has been the theme of numberless writers and forms a choice chapter in the history of the American people. Their libraries were in many respects extensive, containing much of the best literature and numerous standard works upon government both American and foreign. The brothers spent their evenings together in the discussion of various topics, the more literary and poetical tastes of the younger brother being influenced by the strong, practical, common sense philosophy of the elder. The ability for leadership was a strong characteristic of both brothers, but in the instance of the younger was accompanied by a personal magnetism very pronounced. That his personality charmed even his slaves and white labor, as it had in the past the Western Indians, is shown in the ease with which he managed and supervised the entire number of plantations during his brother's long absences in the North.[1] His close contact with the slaves and numerous white persons employed about the extensive estate won from them an affection and respect that continued through life, and many pleasing recollections of their quaint mannerisms and primitive philosophy enriched his memory. To the negroes he was not only the kindest but the finest young gentleman anywhere in the country and they were constantly seeking to win his approval. Attached as they were to the elder brother, the magnetism and

[1] Joseph Davis frequently spent the summer North with his family leaving everything to the younger brother's care and judgment.

personal attraction of the younger fascinated them. Allusions to his early life on the western frontier as a gallant young soldier had reached their ears, stirring and arousing their natural admiration of the unusual and romantic.

"Everybody bows down before the younger brother," Varina commented to herself after a few days at "The Hurricane." Though a young woman of only seventeen years, she was not without discernment; and while experiencing in a full measure the lighter joys and emotions of youth, she possessed more than an average comprehension of the conditions, forces, and influences in the lives of those about her —a method of study and thought that her tutor had insisted on. She was able even at this age to form conclusions, yielding them only when convinced of better ones. She was scarcely mature enough to possess definite ambitions, but every cell of her unripe mental organism was aspiring, evolving, seeking fuller development with the rapidity of a thrifty young plant. Climate had something to do with the hurried development of young women in this semi-tropical region, but every racial strain in the young girl's being was strong, and had been in her case nurtured and cultivated in an atmosphere conducive to their best development. To understand the woman in later years one would have to know how sweet and wholesome—and her tutor insisted, aspiring—the young girl's life had been. "Varina Howell is a mighty fine girl," was a common saying about Natchez, contemporaries have said.[1] This constant praise may or may not have added to her ego; she was not lacking in consciousness of self as distinct from others. But had this not have been a natural trait she in all probability would have acquired it since she belonged to a class that

[1] Mrs. Coulson to Mrs. H. B. Kells.

kept it well to the fore. However, she was at the present taking new lessons in life and was full of its new revelations, revelations that still held much of mystery for her. Fascinated from the moment of her first meeting with Jefferson Davis she was still thoughtful enough to see that he was much older than herself. Did this difference in their ages make it possible for a fulfillment of the romance to which all youth looks forward and has a right to expect at least once in life? It is certain that Varina asked herself no such question. For herself, though she would have at that stage of her new experience denied it, she felt the attraction more powerfully for the contrast in years. People are largely creatures of the social customs of their day, and it was held in those days something of a triumph for a young woman to win the regard of a man ten years or more her elder. Varina was an apt pupil of the modes and methods of her day and the teachings of her elders became not only her conduct and behavior but her opinions and faiths as well, which last in many instances are little else than the customs and notions of one's environment. As her interest in the grave, distinguished looking younger brother, who had instantly stirred her imagination, secretly grew it continued to please her to find that everybody, from the smallest piccaninny toddling about the negro quarters up to the master of "The Hurricane," expressed their admiration of him in numberless ways. Women are like that, though this is not all there is to them. Some cling, and Varina was of this type, more tenaciously to the objects of their affection though the world anathematized them. On this attribute in woman may be predicated her infinite power.

Early in her visit Varina found herself growing more curious each day about "the handsome younger brother," a

phrase that members of the house party were beginning to pass from lip to lip before she had left Mrs. McCaleb's house. Mrs. McCaleb's husband, Mr. David McCaleb, in fact is said to have coined it. Fond of his wife's attractive, influential and generous relations he found real pleasure in quietly watching the family and framing nice compliments about its various members. It was a frequent prophecy of his that the younger brother would "some day make his mark in life." Nor did this come of a fawning spirit since he was himself very much a gentleman; but like all of the large family he was genuinely attached to this special member and openly under the spell of his personality.[1] Varina noted it all with secret pleasure and to her mortification was beginning to be conscious of why she did so. To veil the feelings in matters of sentiment touching the other sex was an instinct early formed, implanted by constant parental advice. Young women of that period of history had for generations been taught to refrain from showing too much interest in any of the opposite sex who had attracted them before these had given assurance of a like interest. The various forms of self-protection, flimsy hypocrocies they might seem today and may have unconsciously been, were resorted to more frequently and regarded with more favor by young women in society at that day than at the present. While these, perhaps, may not have been as free and untrammeled in the best sense as young women are today they were at least what the modern critic calls *safe*. Cooped up by a thousand restrictions of a social order as yet untouched by machinery, invention, or scarcely any device of the later day activities of social progress they were what was later for numerous decades known as Victorian and in every atom. The lower strata may have snatched their pleasures; admitted, but never these

[1] Conversations with descendants of contemporaries.

moulded and corseted ones of the ante bellum South, who even blushed at the free lines of the bodies of the "common whites" who sometimes ventured abroad. In later American Victorian eras that had witnessed a devastating war Edmonia Bredalbane of "The Romantic Comedians" might have come on the stage, but not at this staid day without hisses that withered like desert winds.

Under existing conditions Varina was to be commended as a young woman of perfect propriety. So far she had not received much else than the polite interest usually given a guest from the distinguished member of the family "at whose shrine" she confided to a girl friend, "everybody worshipped." Was she, too, yielding to the spell of his magnetic personality? As yet she would have blushed at the accusation and emphatically said, "No." As long as she was nothing more to him than just a school girl visiting his relatives she would continue to write home, "I do not think I shall ever like him as I do his brother Joe."

CHAPTER VII

IN CLOSER TOUCH

WHATEVER else psychoanalists and character readers may see in Varina's assertion "I do not think I shall ever like him as I do his brother Joe," they will agree after studying her letter that she was more curious and concerned about the younger brother than the eldest. "Uncle Joe" she could take in at a glance, but here was one she must study. She was conscious in some dim way that he had touched her life; had already affected it. That she criticized him was merely a means of self-protection that spoke well for what we now term the false modesty of her day; however, she was not willing for the superiority of the man who had aroused her interest to be lost on others and was eager to the point of jealousy that he should have his due. It was not as shrewd a letter that she sent home to her mother as she had meant it to be. If both parents smiled which they very likely did —the mother at least, there was ample reason for it.

The difference in their ages, which she rather ruefully points out to her mother, in the end, would prove no handicap since people of her temperament and mental development demand a great deal of superiority in those who attract them; besides she had been taught as had many generations of her sex before her, that women should in the phrase of the day, "look up to their men folk," and "some difference in their ages was a good thing for this and other reasons." Looking up to their men folks was the proper thing to do mothers even

went so far as to admonish their marriageable daughters. It made for happiness and all the family dignity and prestige so keenly desired in marital relations at that period. And yet these frail caryatids offering their slim bodies for support, succeeded in getting themselves astonishly coddled and pampered, if not recognized as the strongest prop in the social structure of their day.

Varina was a product of her time and teachings and for the present at least was a docile pupil in many respects, though there were in her thought and outlook even in youth an independence and alertness beyond her day and environment. She had always regarded her elders with great deference, looked upon her parents and her tutor, though they were still in their prime, as elderly people and reverenced them accordingly. That she did not after all place Jefferson Davis in this class may be gathered from her *Memoir* that he looked to her to be "only thirty and was as active as a boy." In all probability after writing the much discussed letter she thought no more about the difference in their ages especially since she had begun to secretly admire him. In her education she had gone farther than the accomplishments. Though her outlook was purely of her day and section she was not an average type. Her tutor early discovered that she could think—thought for herself. That she read and pronounced her Latin phrases well and translated them readily surprised Jefferson Davis as she read aloud to Mr. Joseph Davis and himself from journals and books that still flaunted numberless foreign phrases in their make-up.[1] Glancing at her casually at first, in his second consideration of her he saw the promise of an unusual womanhood. As he quietly watched her he was conscious of some mysterious

[1] Girlhood confidences. *A Memoir,* Vol. I.

attraction stronger than he had ever felt for any other living creature. Of this there was much proof throughout life. A new type half indigenous half exotic but blended so proportionally that it created beauty was his vague, artistic impression. His maturer thought was that here was a beautiful young woman so young that she might be called a mere girl, formed it seemed merely for girlish laughter and gaiety, yet possessing a mentality so clear and strong, finely trained and developed, as to make her an agreeable companion for those much her elders. And this in woman invariably works for charm. Her almost childish gaiety sometimes seemed incongruous as it clashed with a wit, power of observation, and fine discrimination that surprised her listeners, her gay sallies drawing from the elder brother deep chuckles of delight, while quietly amusing the younger. The latter's interest in her was more noticeable each day to various members of the Davis family.

As the house party progressed it proved, it has been said, to be a very delightful one, and in all its gaieties Varina became a leading spirit. She confided later to a friend that she had never thought that any one could be as happy as she was "during that visit."

"She will take high rank in the world of feminity when she blossoms out and comes thoroughly to herself," Mr. Joseph Davis ventured to his brother Jefferson when the reading circle had broken up one evening for lighter pleasures.[1] Not waiting for a reply, though he scanned the face of his brother closely to note the effect he exclaimed with fervor—mythological characters appealing to him—"By Jove she is as beautiful as a Venus!"

[1] Conversations with Mrs. Harriet B. Kells whose mother was a contemporary of Joseph E. Davis.

The younger man was still silent. He knew beautiful women when he saw them but was never given to lavish expressions of gallantry in his intercourse with the sex. After a few moments he said quietly, "Yes, she is beautiful and has a fine mind."

Though at present he still treasured in his heart a delicate image to which death had lent a sacred beauty as of something holy Jefferson Davis was now aware of a more tremendous surge of all the deeper currents of life than he had ever experienced. That the young visitor had won his heart was soon apparent to all. Although a quiet one he proved to be an ardent lover. His thoughts of her grew daily more constant as she mingled joyously and with natural grace with the large company of his kinsfolk during the happy Christmas season. That she was admired by all and led in all the gay amusements was not lost on either of the brothers.

With the elder brother she was at perfect ease and often with her hand in his strolled about the picturesque large country place listening to his varied experiences which included reminiscences of her parents, boating on the Mississippi, prominent families of Natchez and many others of a full and active life.[1]

To twit her about the Whigs and their various political schemes and defend the new Democracy taking such deep hold in the State was a favorite pastime with him. His sallies, however, in the present instance took the form more of personal teasing than of any particular criticism of the party and her defense of it amused him greatly. Loving him as she did, and having been taught to trust him from infancy, it never occurred to her to doubt or question him in any particular. Though she still wondered and with some

[1] Girlhood confidences. Mrs. Coulson to Mrs. Kells.

perturbation at the political faiths of the younger brother, in some unconscious way she could connect the elder with the Democratic party without any disparagement to him. All of the "elegant people" of her social circle were Whigs and though scarcely comprehending the strong Federal arguments of the Editors of the National Intelligencer she had gained a partial insight into them through Judge Winchester her faithful tutor. Along with much Latin and English he had made it a duty to see that she was well grounded in the political and religious faiths of those who were regarded as the Gentry of the State. To be a Whig and an Episcopalian —what more was necessary? That Joseph Davis was not of this class did not disturb her, but that his younger brother Jefferson did not belong to it continued to surprise and pain her.

There were other things to be found in the Intelligencer besides attacks on Martin Van Buren and Varina giving her impressions of the Duke of Wellington, Lord Brougham, London and other world topics charmed and delighted the old man as she walked lightly by his side dressed in a "rose-colored marino made with a corded waist and full skirt," a style which set off her fine girlish figure to good advantage.[1]

One morning in particular, she told her young friends in Natchez, they explored the entire house and grounds. Jefferson Davis had ridden over to "Brierfield" to look after his interests there and to attend to the various wants of the negroes during the holidays. With Mrs. Davis confined to her room, a semi-invalid, and the various members of the house party engaged in small personal affairs nothing delighted Varina more than a stroll with her kind old host. Exploring the great rambling building first, in order to give

[1] Girlhood confidences.

the winter sun time enough to dry the morning mist, they found themselves in the general store room much to Varina's delight who had seen them passing in and out of the place twenty times a day loaded with small boxes, bridles, saddles and guns.[1]

"Candy" she exclaimed as she gazed at the row of shelves. "Yes" we keep everything from candy up—blankets, osenburgs, shoes, calico, pocket knives all for the negroes. We can't go to Vicksburg every time they want something—and their wants are legion."

"What do you do with so many guns Uncle Joe?" Varina asked curiously. "It looks like the Armory at Natchez."

"Oh Jeff and I between us have about a dozen men on our places who are better shots than we are and we take them all along when we hunt deer and bear up and down the river. The cane-brakes, you know, are thicker than Chinese walls in places and it takes about a dozen of us to find Bruin when he is cornered."

Varina was further surprised. The thought of such an elegant man as Mr. Jefferson Davis, whom all the people in the State were praising and inviting to all of their public meetings, in company with his own slaves wading through the bayous and sloughs and breaking down tall cane-brakes in search of wild animals struck her as decidedly "common" a term very much in use at that day in designating people as well as things.[2] She had heard of the poor whites hunting with the negroes but never supposed that a gentleman ever hunted except in a party of other gentlemen. But she had yet to understand the meaning of the democracy that made

[1] *A Memoir,* Vol. I. Mrs. Coulson to Mrs. Kells. Girlhood confidences.

[2] Girlhood confidences.

the Master of "Brierfield" a missionary to his still barbaric slaves. Judge Winchester and her parents had taught her truths in the higher culture and elegancies of life but newer and rarer truths awaited her.

As Varina's host continued to show her about the place, though she had already seen much of what he now pointed out, the great house interested her intensely with its spacious, rather heavy architecture. In many respects different from the more delicate and elegant outlines of the beautiful homes around Natchez it still had a peculiar charm and dignity of its own, with its high many windowed walls and wide floors. Above the heavy roof numerous sharp-pointed dormers glistened in the sun like so many spires. The wide lawns around it were filled with immense forest trees, many of which were brought from European gardens to flourish as native growth. Taken all in all the great building presented an air of isolated grandeur. Part of it had been swept away by a terriffic storm that raged along the river in years past, and the new buildings gave it a rambling misshapen appearance in keeping with the rank luxurious nature about it.[1] Its three stories looked down on immense rose gardens, peach and apple orchards, farther out stood a long row of heavily built stables and cribs of many descriptions, and still farther away nestled a small hamlet of white-washed cabins. The estate, a visitor says, appeared like a little town lying along the river.[2]

From the high windows of the main dwelling could be had a panorama of magnificent views of the river, the heavy, yellowish waters gleaming through the interstices of the grey forests. Varina was thrilled at the sight, and says that

[1] Reminiscences of Mrs. M. P. H. Roach.
[2] Reminiscences of Mrs. M. P. H. Roach.

she asked him why he called it "The Hurricane"—"The people at home call it 'The Davis Bend.' "

"Yes that is what the people in Vicksburg call it," he told her, "but to me," and his eyes grew a little dim, "it will always be 'The Hurricane.' Much has happened to give it that name—two children dead, two fine boys, the brightest of them all, a wife's health broken completely, and a storm that cost nearly all of us our lives as it shook the house down over our heads—that's enough surely to give it its name." "Hem! Hem!" he finished with a quick breath that sounded like a gasp.[1] He was bluff, she says, self-centered and somewhat domineering, but generous and hearty and devoted to his friends, and among them he told her none was loved better than her father.

Seeing his depression, Varina, quick to take in any situation even in youth changed the subject, exclaiming on the magnificent view of the river gained from the tall windows of the top story, and otherwise seeking to divert his thoughts from a gloomy subject.

Coming down she says to the lower floor, they passed through the luxurious drawing-room and tea room into the large high arched music room where he pointed out to her several family portraits with a return of his usual gusto and cheerfulness. "My father, Samuel Davis," he told her, "did everything well." They stood before the portrait of a thin-faced rather handsome man of about sixty.[2] "He was a good soldier—none better, a good citizen, a good master to his negroes and the best rider in all the country—looked like

[1] Confidences of girlhood.

[2] Samuel Davis was a Revolutionary soldier and was said to be one of the most graceful figures of his day on horseback. See Rowland's Encyclopedia of Mississippi.

one of Charles' Cavaliers when on horseback, like one would imagine Peveril of the Peak looked—Jeff reminds me of him at times so much that it startles me. I am like the maternal lines—Cooks and Emorys—heavy set, easy going. Jeff got his mother's taste for poetry and her sweet, winning ways, though he is tall and spare like my father and has a grave and silent manner at times that reminds me very much of father." In like fashion he ran on talking and old records state that he at this time gave Varina a sketch of Jefferson Davis and told her that "Brierfield" belonged to his young brother.[1] From the great house she says they passed out of the "thick panneled glass doors" into the grounds on which a clear winter sun was now shining out of cloudless blue skies such as are so often seen in the far Southern river country. The world about them was saturated in golden light.

She had barely time to say something about the beautiful Christmas weather before she heard him exclaim as he scanned the open spaces where the great plantations lay between dense growths of oak, cottonwood and magnolia, "There comes Jeff now from 'Brierfield.' "

With Welch paternal ancestry, she had been told that through maternal lines the brothers were Scotsmen and when glancing in the direction he indicated she saw a handsome figure on horseback approaching, she says that she instantly thought of Wallace, Glendower and Bruce and like heroes of history.[2] If Varina was at this age a sentimental young woman with a highly romantic imagination it must be remembered that it was a day reeking with sentimental emotions of a varied nature, and in matters of love

[1] Records in the Mississippi Historical Society.
[2] Confidences of girhood. Mrs. Harriet B. Kells.

most young women pictured their lovers as invested with qualities of the heroes of history and literature.

When Jefferson Davis joined them the thoughtful elder brother, she humorously told friends in after days, suddenly remembered an appointment with some one of his numerous foremen.

CHAPTER VIII

HOLIDAY PLEASURES

VARINA HOWELL was a product of a social order and evironment as staid as the world had ever witnessed for women. and was a devout advocate of a strict construction of all the rules that governed social conduct at that period of southern history. The adventuring, pioneer spirit had permitted more freedom to the less fortunate of society. These lived in a world of their own where inclination had never been tightly laced. Poverty carries few obligations, and as long as there was ignorance there could be no pain. But the upper crust of society was of the tight stays and voluminous skirt pattern and Varina and her set were good copyists and imitators of the modes and manners of the day. In that stratum for the feminine gender the Victorian age had set in in America several decades before it was announced at Windsor; in fact was indigenous to the soil, stemming from the Great Lady Washington herself. Varina could be said to represent the accepted model of the proprieties which had been firmly established in the White House of the New Republic. In a very decorous manner along the narrow winding country roads she walked on sunny days with Jefferson Davis through green groves of moss-draped magnolia, live oak, cottonwood and gum, sometimes slightly in advance of the gay party, out for a ramble, sometimes lingering a few

paces behind. She must not forget that she was visiting his relatives; her grandmother Kempe had been very fastidious in such matters. The Grahams of Virginia were "very particular."

Climate had made them an outdoor people—lovers of nature. The great river shining through vistas of cleared forests—its huge yellow billows rolling heavily towards the sea, at times bathed in gorgeous sunsets, at others grey and sullen, was very often their destination and a favorite subject of conversation. Born upon its banks, which but lately had been called "coasts," and accustomed to its somber almost repellant beauty since childhood, Varina knew its history and legends as she knew the stories of her six McGuffee readers. While Jefferson Davis might translate for her some marvelous passage of Virgil she could match it with a romance of the great river so gripping as to make him wonder at her youthful powers. No members of the house party, perhaps, enjoyed the majestic stream with as keen zest as did the happy young girl and the man at her side; and throughout life it was to have for them numberless associations of which they little dreamed at the present.

Various outdoor sports she tells us were indulged in by the young people of the house party—horseback riding being a favorite recreation, as it was with many of the better class of the country. Conditions had kept them close to nature. Science and invention in the matter of real comfort played but little part in the lives of the people of this rather primitive society, but a certain well being and wholesomeness were evident in their sound laughter and keen enjoyment. Still, although remote from populous centers, many luxuries were found in their homes, such as much fine furniture, statuary, paintings and books. At this time such things were to be had

in abundance throughout the Natchez region of the State. Everything for the home that New Orleans and Philadelphia could supply was scattered about in rank profusion in the great houses, many of which were furnished direct from Paris. If the "lords of creation" *sometimes* wiped their hands on the handsome table cloth over their egg nog, juleps and other numerous grogs, there were gentle, patient ladies, and slave women to set everything in order. But notwithstanding such lapses there was an irrestible charm and a show of much fine breeding in their manner and mode of life. If George Winchester had brought his Greek and Latin Dictionaries with him from Massachusetts, W. B. Howell had brought official and military pride from New Jersey while Margaret Graham, the grandmother of Varina had brought, not only her coat of arms, but her peacock fly-brush with her from Virginia, and there were more slave boys in Natchez to wave the latter than were left behind in Prince William county. The various contributions blended admirably after a few years, spouting much Latin, talking politics and in the instance of the women delighting in great hoops and enormous coiffures. The house party at "The Hurricane" reflected the life of the river region.

The horses of the Davis stables were among "the best in America." At "The Hurricane" every pleasure the country afforded was provided for the guests, and each when riding was furnished with a good saddler. Varina's, a dark bay, had been selected for her with great care, she had heard them say, by Jefferson Davis himself, and for that reason, as well as from her natural taste for such sport she took much delight in riding it. She was a good observer and took in with a glance the many details of the great plantations.[1] Even the

[1] Girlhood confidences.

names of the various horses were soon known to her, and she felt sure Jefferson Davis had selected most of them. There was Highland Henry, Black Oliver, and the Grey Medley.[1] She recalled them vividly and many little stories connected with them long years afterwards. "Uncle Joe" though he might approve of them would never have thought to choose such names she felt sure. His own saddle horse on which he rode the country wide he called "Old Speck" because of its color, a color which was and is yet often spoken of as "flea bitten gray" by the country folk. It was like him to associate people and animals with some characteristic, or with some circumstance or accident connected with them. Varina had early been able to read his mind, open, positive material, she felt it to be without a full sense then of the meaning of such terms. In the younger brother her task was more subtle and fascinating. She soon discovered his pleasure and delight in the open country, in nature, and in the sheer hardihood of living, the last sometimes surprising her more cultivated tastes.

She says that he found the keenest pleasure in long excursions on horseback and had the riding party out constantly. Sometimes he would tell her that she made a pretty picture in her long, dark blue habit and small hat with curling plume, a style very much in vogue at that day. On these occasions he usually rode with her and noted with keen pleasure that she sat her horse well and managed it with ease and confidence.[2] The country over which they took

[1] A fine animal sired by Black Oliver, a large Canadian stallion, was taken from Jefferson Davis' plantation, Brierfield, by Federal soldiers during the war between the States and presented to General Grant for a saddle horse.

[2] Conversations with descendants of contemporaries.

their morning canters was an unusual one. Perhaps the word magnificent would better describe it. The Southern winter weather is generally at its best at this season and at such times the sun shines on field and river like molten gold. She had seen something of country life on the large plantations lying around Natchez but none of that section had seemed so immense to her as the great open fields of the "Davis Bend" lying in the arms of the broad river and set off here and there with "rows and clusters of small white houses," the homes of the colonies of black folk whose shining faces were evidence of their well being.[1] They were swarming everywhere in and out of their neat white-washed cabins filled with the festive spirit of the Christmas season at which time they were given a holiday of several weeks. They were proud of being known as the "Davis Negroes," and today their faces lit up with broad smiles whenever they passed their young master in the riding party. It was always a joyous season with them and it was evident from their deep laughter and rocking gait that a number of them along with "Mars Joe" felt their "Christmas dram" considerably.[2]

Varina's delight in the life about her was keen. The sunlight, her companion told her, was no whit brighter to him than her face. Still possessing the naiveté and ego of the child her store of wise good sense made a quaint combination that greatly amused him. He felt her charm growing upon him daily. Women had not been much in his life but the few he had known were such as to give him con-

[1] Reminiscences of Mrs. M. P. H. Roach, who often visited "The Hurricane."

[2] Mr. Joseph Davis indulged to some extent in the use of stimulants. Jefferson Davis rarely partook of intoxicants and then sparingly.

fidence in all women. As the days passed she became like some new healing balm to his tired heart, long lonely for the comfort of female companionship. In her society he felt his youth returning to him, and with it a keener desire than he had known for years to once more take part in the affairs of the world about him.

That she was intellectually inclined at so early an age pleased him. While the men of his period did not expect too much of their female acquaintance along intellectual lines, being content so long as these were mistresses of the lighter accomplishments such as music, dancing, riding, a little French and some poetry, the more cultured class of men enjoyed with keen zest the society of women of sprightly intellectuality provided it did not run into the frumpy type but was accompanied by natural charm and sincerity.[1] Such women—and there were, at least one or even more, in every community, wielded a strong influence in the social and political circles of the day with the drawing room for their rostrum. It might not be thought the correct, even the decent thing to do, to argue in the open street, but more than one fluent, if not sharp tongue was heard in the drawing rooms of Southern society during that staid era under discussion. The historian, Bancroft, knew whereof he spoke when he said in some such wording that one had to know the facts when talking history to a Southern woman. The vast majority, however, were more concerned about the set of their hoops and side curls, or if married their husbands, babies and homes. Varina expected to be precisely

[1] The author recalls quite a number of charming elderly women of a highly intellectual type who lived to old age after the war between the states.

the woman her mother was, though her tutor knew that she would, to a large extent, be different.

As much as with her beauty, though he was not blind to her physical charms, Jefferson Davis was charmed with her unusual mental powers. "As well as good looks, she has a mind" that would, Mr. Joseph Davis boasted, "fit her for any sphere that the man to whom she was married might well feel proud to reach." Yet she, her tutor told her mother, who grew somewhat alarmed over the strong course of study he persisted in, "would always continue feminine" and so invested with its grace and charm that there would be "endless and entertaining variety." It was largely what the lonely master of "Brierfield" needed who even now gave signs of absorption in only a few things.

The last week of Varina's visit to "The Hurricane" came all too soon for the lovers. There was talk of her returning home; the Howells themselves wise enough in social matters concluded the stay and there was nothing that Mr. Joseph Davis could do towards prolonging it. The family exerted themselves to make the last days the happiest for her. Both she and Jefferson Davis had given themselves freely to the entertainment of the various guests, but shrewd eyes now discovered that they preferred being alone, and tactful Miss Mary Bradford no less than "Uncle Joe" at this juncture it is said, took special pains to keep the other guests diverted.[1]

Their love affair, never well disguised was suspected by all during these last days. The elder brother looked on at first with such unconcealed delight that it was necessary at times for them to assume a certain air of dignity which he instantly detected and respected. Now that the matter had

[1] Girlhood confidences.

become serious she says that he changed his manner to one of grave proprietorship so sincere and fatherly that it gave no offense. Though much given to the lighter vein even to the extent of jocularity and waggery he had a strong responsive nature and a deep insight into the motives and actions of men. These he viewed with tolerance yet at times with suspicion which was sometimes directed toward the members of his family it has been said. The younger brother to the contrary was not given to doubting the motives of men and had to learn this art in the hard school of experience. It continued to be a cultivated one to the end. Little or no record of any romance in the life of the elder brother is recorded, and with a being so normal as he has been described one could scarcely associate romance of any nature. His marriage is merely recorded in scant biographical notices and none are informed as to whether it was a happy one or not, except what might be inferred from a statement made by Varina in after years that "whatever philippics he vented upon others," and these were reserved for any of the numerous kin who chanced to offend him, he "generally spared the wife." Although it is not known that he himself was ever given to sentiment the romance that attached to the lives of others must have been relished by him with a zest felt only by kindly spirits. Besides his own daughters, his young nieces and nephews had their love affair under his eye. The early sorrow of his younger brother had touched him deeply. He was intensely proud of him and among other achievements his military service in the west was a favorite topic of conversation. Warmly attached to the Howells as he was the thought that the families of Davis and Howell would be united in marriage filled him with an almost boyish delight. That the happiness of his brother would be secured in the

connection gave him a deeper satisfaction than he had experienced for years. Having assumed the place of a father to the young brother since his early college days, and recognizing in him a man of superior powers and attainments, both his affection and family pride—always strong characteristics of his nature, were greatly stirred. However, it was generally a criticism among the kin that with his favors went the price that he must be looked up to as the beneficiary. Towards Jefferson Davis, to whom he was intensely devoted he never exhibited this spirit. He himself had been ambitious in youth and in the younger brother he felt that he would see achieved all the success in public life to which he had doubtlessly looked forward.

CHAPTER IX

LOVERS

VARINA'S visit to "The Hurricane" would on the morrow come to an end. On the day before her departure she says that she sat through the late afternoon with Jefferson Davis in the white, high walled music room which had become a favorite meeting place with them. It was a pleasant room in "cream and rose furnishings" and was in winter warmed by "an open fire of blazing hickory logs mounted on strong brass andirons." In it were to be found a number of the best musical instruments of the day.[1] He noticed she said that she no longer wore what she called her "Sub Treasury Brooch" and with a little gay banter called attention to it. The pin had belonged to her mother, but she had often worn it; and thinking it a sign that she was reaching young womanhood and was expected to begin thinking for herself, she decided to wear it on her visit to "The Hurricane." The curious little device[2] had been a subject of much light raillery among the guests—for the most part belonging to the new democracy—and her defense of the principles it represented always drew a deep chuckle from Joseph Davis who boasted that "Varina Howell understood the history of the Whig party better than most of the men who belonged to it, not excepting those lordly worthies, Winchester and Prentiss." It was evident to all, from her interpretation,

[1] Reminiscences of Mrs. M. P. H. Roach.
[2] *A Memoir,* Vol. I. Girlhood confidences.

that Andrew Jackson's rough democracy had been too crude for the fastidious Whig ladies, loyal adherents at this late day of much of Hamilton and Washington's political creeds and faiths. There was much political condemnation of each other indulged in by leaders of both parties at that time. Among Democracy's daily deeds, born of ignorance, injustice and tyranny, the arrogant Whigs contended, dire confusion had menaced the Southern country in the removal of the Treasury Deposits from the National Banks. Varina in a measure knew her political creed by heart but understood its application at that period of life in social matters better perhaps than in those of government. In her immediate section the Whigs were stronger than anywhere else in the State. These, who were referred to as the "best people" of the State, led by the gifted Winchester and Prentiss and other brilliant luminaries, were striving with might and main to hold the aristocratic element together in political bonds; but already Democratic caucusses were being held at Vicksburg and other places and these were fast picking off many of the choicest members of this descendant of the old colonial party. Varina's lover was at the present time a candidate brought forward by the people in the autumn of 1843 as the Democratic choice to defeat the Whig party in Warren County. Often as she listened eagerly to his earnest discussions of governmental principles she found herself wondering in some perplexity why one so well-bred and cultured should be so concerned about the welfare of the "common people" and their "inherent rights under the Constitution." This class of society had always seemed to her of negligible importance in the country's affairs. It was the government's duty to take care of them rather than they should seek to shape its policies. The country was safe as long as the

better class ruled it. Her political creed was so interwoven with her social one that they seemed one and the same.

Today, however, there was no reference to public affairs of any nature. Political questions that were beginning to interest him were thrust into the background if not forgotten. Handsome and graceful with a certain calm dignity that softened and cooled the heat of his earnest, ardent nature he was to her the ideal of all that she had ever dreamed a lover could be. She, too, was oblivious of all else but the present. Her own happiness had crowded out all other emotions, conceptions and impressions. It is gathered however, from general girlhood confidences that even at this age, she was not without some calculation. Though scarcely at the door of womanhood she confesses that she experienced a swift sense of triumph. That he "the handsomest and most distinguished young man in the river country" was her lover she admits made her "a very proud, young creature."

It was all just as her parents would approve she told herself with a flutter of the heart, and usually a parent's approval was a powerful incentive at that period of history. She was unconscious of having had anything to do with its accomplishment; would have resented even the inference. It was much as if some special Providence over night had brought her a gift so marvelous and beautiful that she felt, as did all the pious Southern folk in contemplating their blessings, that Heaven had much to do with it.

That Jefferson Davis was now very much in love with her was plain to the various members of the house party. They gave each other understanding glances and ceased to make any plans that did not include both. While she may have unconsciously by numberless, instinctive arts that develop early in the feminine breast, led on the pursuit it was

he who dominated in the love-making. Individualistic as she naturally was it was evident that her will was being shaped by one more powerful.

They lingered, she says, through the late afternoon in the music room. The setting sun, shining through the filmy lace curtains draping the many paned windows, threw long, slanting rays upon their shapely heads bent close together in the hour of parting.[1] She once said to her intimate friends that she had never seen as beautifully shaped head as her lover's, not even that of Sargeant S. Prentiss about which everybody raved, but which some held was set on shoulders too small for its size.

Varina was now deeply in love and at fever heat to share her secret with her mother. Not to her most intimate friend of the house party could she divulge it. No, this was one secret that young women of her day first shared with their parents, and next to the pain of parting with her lover was the desire to confide in her mother.

[1] Confidences of girlhood.

CHAPTER X

ENGAGEMENT. GIRLHOOD CONFIDENCES

That Varina Howell's political and social faiths and creeds had been more deeply rooted than she was conscious of can be gathered from the exclamation made in confidence with a little burst of regret to a girl friend when describing her lover, "Oh if he was only a good old Whig I would be perfectly happy!"[1]

She was back at "The Briers," the pleasant home overlooking the river; had taken her secret to her parents and together she and her mother had rejoiced over her good fortune, for this, they frankly believed it to be. Both mother and father were pleased with her choice, especially since it made the daughter very happy. Jefferson Davis as had been planned between them had immediately followed her home and had gained her parents' permission to ask her hand in marriage. The Howells had remembered their early acquaintance with him as a young West Point Cadet telling Varina how favorably he had then impressed them. He in turn had recalled the meeting with them when they had in company with his brother Joe visited the school—what a "lovely lady" he had thought Mrs. Howell. Varina had pouted a little, surprised that none of them had in the past told her about the meeting. In this manner his first visit, a proud as well as happy event in Varina's life, had come to an end. And now there were confidences with dearest girl

[1] Mrs. Coulson to Mrs. H. B. Kells.

friends sealed with solemn vows never to divulge the guarded secret until it was given out by the family. It had weighed on her mind after her return home that her lover was a member of the despised Democratic element of society composed of the common class which, in the main even, the negroes had classified as "po white trash," as far removed from the well-bred gentlefolk as "the stars were from the earth." William B. Howell, a somewhat domineering husband, had always swept his wife with him on any public matter. Though a Whig himself and a vestryman of Old Trinity he was well pleased with the turn affairs had taken for his daughter. No other man had meant as much to him as had Joseph Davis and the younger brother had instantly charmed him. Besides, was not the whole State comparing him, and that favorably, with S. S. Prentiss—"What did political parties amount to any way"—"It was the man after all." "Had not James Kempe himself been a Republican which was only a recent name for this new Democracy?—and was he not one of the high headed aristocrats of the country"—"Yes it was the man after all."

Whatever mortification Varina might feel over the situation, her father felt thoroughly satisfied in the matter, and his wife, although not without a full share of the Kempe temperament in which kindliness, good humor and passion were equally blended with strong self will, in unison with the women of that day trusted much to her husband's judgment. This pliancy may have kept woman the weaker vessel, but it insured potency, vigor and initiative to the man. In what Utopia will both thrive in the same hour?

As days passed the whole matter of young Davis' politics was "pooh poohed" by Varina's father and consequently ignored by her mother. Too, in a country which was fast

outgrowing old forms political differences had ceased to be strong enough to affect personal affairs, certainly personal interests. For the sturdier minded the Whig party was losing its hold, was becoming effete, barren, more a hall mark to indicate social prestige than a workable governmental principle in a land of large freedom and fast expanding theories of individual and community rights. The social distinction it had gathered about it in the older States explained the reverence with which the female portion of the better class here still clung to it. Not yet absorbed with genealogical research, in pursuit of coats of arms and other family distinctions, the elegant Whig ladies flaunted their husband's party affiliation to distinguish themselves from the "common herd," a phrase very much in use at that day. That Varina had become a staunch upholder of the political faiths and principles of which she boasted was due, more to the long association with her tutor, a Federalist for generations, than to any other influence. No sooner than she had returned home she had anxiously inquired of her mother what Judge Winchester thought of Jefferson Davis' politics. Would she and her family be called upon to go down to the depths and fish these dirty folk up out of the dregs and spend their lives bathing them in clean water? In her own words would her family have to henceforth associate with people whom even Mammy Jane termed "white trash." For herself, loving him as she did, she had decided that whatever Jefferson Davis' faiths might be she would not let anything stand in the way of their love. But there were others and she was jealous that he should be all that her most exacting friends required. She might think that it took this added symbol of what to her constituted caste to give her perfect satisfaction and still be happy, but the bare thought of the high-bred

Prentiss and her tutor looking askance at her lover filled her heart with uneasiness.

As the days passed and he came often to see her there was so much about him that completely charmed her that she at times found her fears fading into mere passing regret. In her happiest dreams she had never imagined that her life would become the broad and colorful thing that it now seemed. Beaux and finally a lover all young woman were expected to have, but here was a lover of whom all the country wide was predicting great things riding hard between his numerous public engagements to spend the brief interval with her—a girl of eighteen. What tale of old history held more charm and romance? Not only Varina but all Natchez was to an extent under the spell of the event. Her young companions to whom her secret was confided likened her to some favored princess that the good fairies were about to crown as they did in the story books. "Heaven had certainly blest the Howell girl," an ancient crone mumbled over her pipe as she watched Jefferson Davis from her window riding back and forth on his visits to "The Briers." A handsomer man I never see in all my life, and not at all like a Democrat, but prouder looking than any man even in Natchez."[1]

Varina's tutor, on whom she still conferred the honorary title of "Great Heart," for the deep love she bore him and for all his nobility of character, could not refrain from a little questioning as to her views of the political party to which Jefferson Davis belonged when he learned that he was a suitor for her hand in marriage. Had he been accepted by herself and family? Even before this had been confided to him he felt privileged to inquire into the matter along any line he chose. Twelve years tutorship certainly had given him the right to a deep interest in his pupil's happiness.

[1] Reminiscences of descendants of contemporaries.

Varina, as every one agreed, owed nearly everything she possessed in the way of an education to him. The lighter graces and accomplishments she had acquired in the best social circles of Natchez, a place that was vieing with such centers as Charleston and Richmond, though on a smaller scale, in the matter of what was proudly termed "Southern culture." Supplementing this there had been training at Miss Greenland's School for young ladies in Philadelphia. But it was not from these sources that Varina Howell had received her deepest culture. To her beloved "Great Heart" she was indebted for her Latin, her love of literature and much of her best philosophy of life. Private tutors of the best ability were at that time sought by the rich planters for their children, and there had been for Varina many years of the most painstaking instruction, as has been seen, under the learned and scholarly New England lawyer, who had along with numerous other professional men of the older States sought the rich new country to better their chances in life. These soon became as much fixtures of the community as the native born—brought their classicism with them to see it ripen—if their noble shapes will not take it as satire, into an idiom savoring of the Homerian gods. Homer, Virgil and Horace, Burke, Gibbon and Macauley, filled their libraries and their speech grew ornate and oratorical but rarely up to the mark.

Like all streaks of good fortune that seem to come to certain people, and which cannot be accounted for unless it is that these not only delight you with their charm but help you to the favor of others, this opportunity of having their daughter taught by a ripe scholar had come to the Howells, and had been eagerly embraced. With an interest and affection, that grew "warmer and tenderer than an instructor's

need become," some whispered, but which no word of his verified, he continued to teach the sprightly Varina for as many as twelve years, refusing all financial return although this was pressed on him from time to time. He claimed that he could not accept a moneyed compensation for that from which he in his loneliness received his chief pleasure. Year in and year out he continued to develop and mould the young girl's mind, filling it not only with the lore of books but with a deep insight into the truths and verities of life, an instruction that went far to prepare her for the high place in life that awaited her. That he impressed her life profoundly one can readily gather from the tributes she paid him not only in her *Memoir* but in every company of friends in which his name was mentioned. His death which occurred in 1851 while she was living in Washington she told her friends was among the first sorrows that she experienced.[1] In after years when a worn and tired hearted but still confident old woman, she turned to his memory for consolation.

Today as he sat with her in his snug little down town office, discussing not Latin odes but governmental principles, looking into her radiant face flushed with excitement in defense of her lover's political theories, little did it occur to him that life could ever become for her less beautiful than at present.

She had come down town in the family carriage to take him home to have some dinner with them, when the family would discuss her future plans. She had not meant to refer to her happiness until they had returned to "The Briers;" had stammered and reddened furiously at the mention of her lover's name, but now that her tutor had made him the subject of their conversation she found herself with a ready enough tongue answering every question concerning him,

[1] Confidences of girlhood.

even more, arguing them out. Judge Winchester now nearing middle age with graying hair about the temples and creeping through his dark, silky beard had been everything to her —her ideal of a perfect man and her reverence for him and confidence in his judgment were among the surest things in life. At first she found herself abashed, with a startled expression in the dark brown eyes at the thought of taking issue with him. But a hidden power drove her on and after one more lengthy controversy on the subject he desisted, astonished and pleased in spite of himself at the clear outline of the country's history she had suddenly acquired. From Jefferson to Calhoun and down to Jefferson Davis she had their political doctrine clearly traced. Though she might confide to a girl friend that she wished that her lover had been a "good old Whig," she found herself an eager defender of his political principles when others attacked them. Loyalty, so strong a characteristic of her warm nature, now gripped her like a vice. She might suffer from its heavy hold, but in its exacting demands she would find her supremest happiness. Her excitement over the turn affairs had taken in her life was running high, and her faithful tutor watched her with much concern. It was enough for her—for any young woman—he thought with a sigh, to be in love, but to be in love with a lover about whom people were daily talking either in terms of praise or censure —and both Democrats and Whigs were constantly being censured if not for themselves for their party, was a trying situation for a mere girl to find herself in. His sympathy for her grew hourly, and with such ardor that he found himself at times unconsciously defending her lover's position on political questions. It is barely possible that the swift young tongue of his pupil in time shattered several of

his political creeds. Without any reminder he felt that his party was on the decline, fraying through with moth-eaten holes; the next few decades would see it fall in pieces. Hold it together as its staunch adherents may it had only another brief period to live. But the rank Democracy—Jacksonian—Phew! Did Thomas Jefferson dream how rank the thing in other minds and hands at times would grow? But there was Varina, the apple of his eye. If she became enmeshed within its folds, there was nothing left for him to do but to grow tolerant. And he shouldn't wonder but that tolerance after all was the best philosophy in life. Besides, what was he that he should boast too strongly? Had he not in years gone by sympathized with South Carolina even defended her principal of States' Rights? He could barely suppress a laugh Varina told friends when she reminded him of his speech on the subject that she had treasured.[1]

[1] The speech was delivered in Natchez in 1832.

CHAPTER XI

WHIG AND DEMOCRAT

Jefferson Davis came often to see Varina at "The Briers," throughout the spring, summer, and autumn of 1844. In his campaign for the State Legislature from Warren County the previous year he had been defeated. The Whigs had in a desperate effort triumphed over the Democrats. It was the first public office he had ever sought in the State and his defeat was not recognized as personal. A score of brilliant Whig speakers, including Seargent S. Prentiss, was selected from Warren to assist in the defeat of the young Democrat about whom they knew little except that he had a brilliant record as a soldier on the western frontier, had distinguished himself in the Black Hawk War and was considered one of the ablest young men in the Democratic Party. He was a brother, too, of Joseph E. Davis and that had been enough to cause the Whigs to put forth their best strength against him. He had been induced to offer for election in opposition to the Whig candidate scarcely more than a week before the election and, while the defeat of his party was inevitable, the Democrats were in high glee over the wide swath he had cut in the ranks of the opposition. His ability to hold his own with the famous Prentiss, the acknowledged Whig leader in the State, delighted them beyond measure; and in logic and depth of reasoning the shrewd ones told each other he far surpassed that brilliant orator. Among the public speakers of that day, a day of rich and fervid oratory,

the latter ranked first in the lower South. In describing him in after years, Jefferson Davis said generously of him, in words to the effect that, though small to boyishness, slightly lame and having a soft lisp that gave the voice a tender accent, his glorious head once seen made one forget his infirmity.

The Whigs, though they took great pride in the assertion made far and wide that the brilliant Prentiss was well nigh invincible, feared the new entry into Democratic leadership. With all their aversion to the party, they nevertheless honored and respected Calhoun and recognized in young Davis a kindred spirit of that great interpreter of democracy and constitutional government. They could see that he already spoke with much of the confidence of Calhoun, and, in personal magnetism and charm, felt that he even had some advantage of his political mentor, who was not without these attractions himself in debate.

In youth Jefferson Davis' oratory, like that of his day, was fervid. Men, it is said, ran to get their friends to come and listen to him whenever he spoke on public occasions, and it was evident on all sides that they were stirred as rarely before by a public speaker. Graceful in bearing, and with a certain air of mastery in his manner, he was more attractive in personal appearance than any of the political leaders of the State. His soldierly bearing appealed to the people whose taste for the romantic, and high adventure of any nature was very pronounced, especially so in that section.

Varina had been spared the disappointment that was sure to have been hers in his first political defeat. It was not until the following Christmas season that she had met him. He was now interesting himself in the Democratic nomination for the Presidency and, if his speeches in controversy

with Prentiss when a candidate for the State Legislature had not convinced the Whigs that a Black Knight had entered the field, the one he made in the State Democratic Convention in favor of Calhoun's nomination by the National Democratic Convention was what a lank, long-limbed countryman dubbed "an eye-opener."

His visits to "The Briers" sometimes clashed with his political engagements, but, as much as she desired to see him, Varina made no great complaint. A certain hard ride he had taken after a public engagement to see her had been unheard of even in that day of hard riding and both she and her mother cautioned against it in the future.[1] In some undefined way which she did not attempt to analyze, she felt that to some extent his success rested with her. She could give him endless anxiety, her prudent parents told her, at this important time of his public career and she herself, with remarkable good grace for one so young, yielded to their view of the matter. She, however, continued to read the papers with feverish interest, and, with the help of her sympathetic tutor and her father, followed every movement of the campaign. So far she had only interested herself in political parties enough to know that she believed in the Whig principles along with her father and tutor, and regarded with contempt the Democrats whom she had, heard derided as "Sandhills," "Hill Billies," "Fly-up-the-creeks," and even "the Dirt Eaters;" and always these were referred to as "the poor whites of the State"—"the common people." Public matters of any nature, personally, had not as yet touched her life, shielded as it had been by the customs and conventionalities of the better class of that day when women were not expected men said, "to rough it in life."

[1] *A Memoir*, Vol. I.

By inheritance and breeding she was an aristocrat purely of good Colonial Virginia and New Jersey ancestry. Her nursery tales had been full of the history, legends and traditions of Prince William County, Virginia. Nor had she escaped some of the vanities and conceits characteristic of her forebears. Such things, as well as traditions, are apt to be handed down. The good breeding that marked her social circle supplemented by family pride that more or less affects one's point of view, and the long years of intensive training under her New England tutor, himself an aristocrat and scholar, could but have made of Varina Howell the peer of any young woman of her day. Small wonder that her outlook was that of the patrician. And as that she must face life—let it be a handicap or not. An old lady said of her when she was a mere school girl that she was "sweet and good but proud as the Dickens."

But life for Varina had suddenly undergone a complete change. The lightness and airiness of youth, so much a part of her, seemed to have vanished. All its care-free disregard and heedlessness had gone, and in their place had come anxiety and self-effacement. But yesterday, she had been spoken of as the lightest hearted girl in Natchez. But today Varina was madly in love and the man she loved was being attacked, maligned, and much denounced by her own social set. She found herself continually resenting things in behalf of her lover's politics and thinking hard on all sorts of public questions, questions thought to be weighty enough for a man's brain. Her mother grew uneasy and sometimes worried over it, saying that "Varina didn't seem like herself."[1] Her tutor smiled a little nervously and advised that she be left alone in the matter. The women of his section

[1] Conversations with descendants of contemporaries.

of the country, though still mewed up in the main, had already begun to think for themselves. Why not the women of the South? Still, it must be recorded that these of the South were not as old fashioned and namby-pamby as they seemed to be, and it should be set down in history that men still, in their disputations, feared that incredulous, grim little line that at times settled around the mouths of the women of 1845. It was the beginning of the Victorian age far more advanced in America than at Buckingham Palace but hard-headedness was a characteristic of the British stocks the world over. There were Victorias, too, everywhere in America, since characteristics and traits are apt to crop out in any transplantation of female society.

Varina had taken as yet few lessons in patience and fortitude. She had little ability to await events without anxiety and pertubation. Her interest in public affairs continued to grow so intense that members of her family feared "a nervous breakdown." First elated over her lover's success and next depressed at the slightest word of unfavorable comment about him—she spent the days seeking to adjust herself to the new attitude and outlook that love had demanded of her. In view of all the young creature in later years was destined to suffer, one finds oneself wishing that the underlying structure of her nature had been less sensitive, and is relieved on discovering there a wonderful resilience and elasticity. "Holding up well," her tutor told her mother. However, as the spring advanced, she grew thin and nervous, strive as she might to suppress her anxiety. Though never wavering in her faithfulness and loyalty to her lover, she was at times crushed, at others angered by some criticism of him from over-zealous Whig partisans.

Jefferson Davis noted the change in her health with deep

anxiety. Still, her widening knowledge and growing interest in democratic theories and principles, even though he knew that it had been at a severe cost to her pride, filled him with admiration. He was eager and strenuous in his campaigning. Besides his political faiths, he must win for her sake, he told her, came often in his thoughts during these days.[1]

His nomination as elector for Polk and Dallas kept him campaigning hard throughout the months of the summer and autumn. Prentiss was speaking in behalf of Clay—Henry Clay—who Varina had been taught was the noblest figure in the public life of the country. Strange that the man she loved should be opposing him. Was he after all a plebian? She put the thought from her instantly recalling like a flash her tutor's lecture on Thomas Jefferson, and, ardent Whig though he was, his sincere admiration of Calhoun the great champion of Democracy. For herself she was learning to understand and to some extent appreciate it. Also, the new faith taking hold of her would help her to understand the man with whom she was passionately in love.[2]

So closely did she study and comprehend the political situation in the State at that time that she was able in after years to record every twist and turn of that special campaign. It had been a general canvass for elections, since the State had not been districted. The scarcity of railroads throughout the State which made travel through it by weekly stage coach trips slow movement, the necessity of supplementing this mode by the use of horses, the hospitality of the country folk, a humorous story of a handsome pair of roached ponies that her lover drove, and numerous other minute details of

[1] Confidences of girlhood.
[2] Conversations with descendants of contemporaries.

the canvass—all came back to her in after years as a picture in which Jefferson Davis was the central figure. The impression he made upon her in those first years of their acquaintance was profound and had much to do with shaping and fixing her attitude toward life. Hers was not a friable will; it yielded to his, not alone because of inclination, but because of her power of recognizing the worth she found in him. The strength of his faith, his sincerity of purpose, his deeply rooted convictions of what was just and right among men, his power to endure without complaint, his enthusiasm, his freedom of small vanities, his love of beauty either of nature, of life, or that found in books, his warm sympathy for the humble and unfortunate classes of society, his liberality and kind thoughtfulness in the care and management of his negroes, but yesterday helpless savages,—all impressed and warmed her young imagination and aroused her mind to new efforts of thought. She did not know how to express all that she felt in her conception of him, but in simple words, as best any young woman could of her age, she confided to an intimate friend, "Oh, he is so noble, so high-minded and good and I love him so." Still, though her new found happiness was stirring her to her depths causing her at times to break out in a glad song, she began daily to show the effects of the nervous strain she was undergoing in connection with her lover's political position in the community. As her family feared, she became very ill with an attack of fever from which she suffered for a number of weeks. Fever of various malignant types was very common to the river country at that period, but it was generally supposed superinduced by poor health, the original cause being largely unknown. In Varina's case her parents and also her tutor suspected that it was caused by overstrain and excitement over her lover's public affairs.

CHAPTER XII

MARRIAGE

When the month arrived that had been set for her marriage, Varina's parents thought her too much exhausted from her recent illness to go through the ceremony. It was February once more—springtime for that latitude—and the lawns and gardens of the little city of Natchez overlooking the Mississippi were filled with white and crimson camellia and other early spring bloom. Jefferson Davis was with her and deeply concerned about her health. It was but a year since she had confessed her love for him at "The Hurricane," and the recollection of it was a vivid one for both. On this visit he spent several days at "The Briers" and the family noticed that in his society she revived, in fact grew gay and spirited at times. They talked of another day for the wedding as soon as she was sufficiently recovered. The Howells were very proud of him and were neither squeamish nor diffident because of the fact that he was to become a member of their family. William B. Howell was thoroughly entrenched in the privileges of the ruling class and felt sufficiently important in himself to affect the original along any line he might choose. He admired Jefferson Davis intensely and felt no hesitancy in letting it be known. Still, though his own estimate was not affected by it, it gave him keen pleasure to note that the whole State, or at least more than half of it was now "singing the young Democrat's praise."

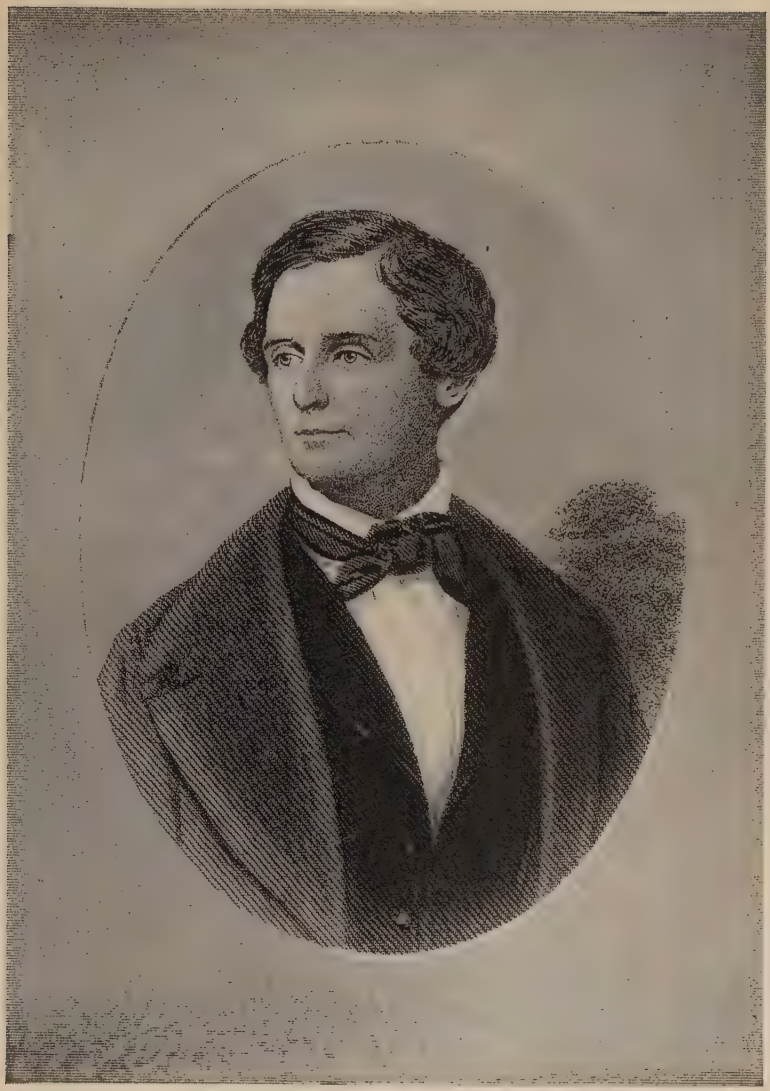
Polk had defeated Clay for the Presidency and the speeches

made by Jefferson Davis in the heated canvass had attracted the attention of the entire State. His eloquence and rare scholarship were themes on many tongues. Varina who had closely followed the Presidential election both locally and nationally, though ill much of the time, listened eagerly to all he had to say about the late Democratic victory.

Clay was the idol of the Whigs; they had nominated him three times and his defeat was a sore disappointment. The admission of Texas was now assured and nothing of a public nature pleased her lover more than this fact.

Their engagement which had become common knowledge was attracting a great deal of attention in Natchez and the surrounding country, and many people were wondering just how the Whig Howells and the Democratic Davises would arrange their broad differences. That all of these on both sides "looked up to" and trusted Joseph E. Davis was readily admitted by the neighbors, and to the curious a knowing one replied with a shrewd smile, "You just wait, Uncle Joe Davis will fix up all the differences."

On a visit to "The Briers" several weeks later Jefferson Davis found Varina so nearly recovered that they decided to have the ceremony during that visit, and on February 26th, 1845 they were married. It was a home wedding, with only near relatives and a few intimate friends present. However, the Reverend David Page, Rector of Old Trinity Church of Natchez, with ring and book and in full clerical robes officiated. The townspeople, especially the set in which Varina moved, had always connected the marriages of prominent people with large and ostentatious weddings, and these were now kept busy wondering why this one which had to do with such prominent people in the State would go off in such a simple manner. Strange that it was



Jefferson Davis

AT THE AGE OF THIRTY-TWO.

not celebrated in a style befitting its social importance. A quiet breakfast with no reception with its long list of invited guests was unheard of in Varina's social set, where every phase of the day's etiquette—and no one member had been a stickler for it more than Varina herself—was observed with a rigid exactness and fastidious nicety that bordered on squeamishness. Whew! what did it all mean? Was it just another instance of the high-headed Howells acting as they pleased, or had they begun this early to ape the Democrats and to play up to the party since they had married into it? Most piquant of all morsels, was it because the Davis family were Baptist—Baptist who didn't put on any special style on any occasion. It was all very singular—and this the most prominent social event of the winter season. It served as food for gossip for the elegant Whig ladies for many days. The trousseau, too, few had seen and there would never be much definitely known about it except what was told to a few intimate friends, the Barfields, Coulsons, Duncans, and Minors. These with pride enough let it be known that they had seen it. From Varina herself we learn that it was neither a very elaborate nor expensive one.[1] Though "elaborate enough for the bride of a farmer," she gayly remarked as she displayed her "treasure trove" to intimate friends.[2] This should be set down for one of her bright sallies, intended only for general application, since she knew, and felt assured of the fact, that Jefferson Davis, while not extravagant in his tastes and never ostentatious in dress or manner, was a man of some wealth and accustomed to all the usages of the best society. He had, it is true, spent much of his youth in the West and such names as Fort

[1] *A Memoir,* Vol. I.
[2] Mrs. Coulson to Mrs. H. B. Kells.

Crawford, Prairie de Chien, Fort Wanebago, Yellow River and those of Jefferson Barracks, Fort Gibson, Gallena Lead Mines, and Dubuque were more familiar to him than the names of places either in the North or the South. Still, he was not even at this time without some social contact with the celebrated men of the country, and perhaps was the only young man in the State who had been bidden to President Van Buren's table and that at a personal request of that high dignitary.

This and numberless other pleasant small incidents of his past life he had related to her from time to time and their intimate and common knowledge of each others' lives, as the wife's *Memoir* reveals, is of itself evidence that both were confiding and congenial in their intercourse with each other. She wondered, placing great emphasis upon such things at this period of life, why he spoke so incidently of this unusual social courtesy to a young man not even as yet in public notice. She herself was very much impressed with the fact that he had been singled out for an intimate social courtesy by the President. She was like all of her kind of that day, and of this, it could be set down in all truth. Democracy may seek to level down the high places of society, but society itself has never progressed much beyond the stage of obeisances, salaams, and genuflections before high position. The sight of a coronet, an insignia or badge still has the power to electrify it. Varina had been brought up and nurtured on such pabulum, so easily digested by the Whigs. It was said of her that she referred more than once to the story just related.[1] But she loved madly, passionately and with a singleness of purpose as unwavering as Victoria's, one, who though an aristocrat in his tastes, aspirations and culture was

[1] Girlhood conversations.

VARINA HOWELL AT THE AGE OF
EIGHTEEN YEARS.

a lover and friend of the people—the great body of people both white and black. Though removed from them in culture and aspiration, he knew their needs and understood and respected their several rights. Thomas Jefferson, whose name had been given him at birth, was not more of a democrat at heart. But the proud—some said "haughty," others said "good, just and generous"—young woman to whom he was now married, what of her? She, possessing the will power that she did, certainly had it in her hands to change the whole course of his life; to have kept him on the Brierfield farm a planter and countryman had she mulishly persisted. It was the life she had thought to lead and even in that day with all their reverence for the word "obey" women sometimes made it hard for their men. But overcoming the self-will that we know she possessed, step by step, inch by inch, it might be said, she climbed with him to dizzy heights until at last, at last, there was no more strength left than merely to carry on. But even that she would do well and with a grace befitting her high station. Not often did she lose sight of what was required of her even at this age. The future was a conjecture, the present was her own and life seemed to be largely what she had expected. She was now she felt sure the happiest of women. Her marriage to Jefferson Davis was a theme on every tongue in the city and throughout the State. Far and near one meeting another in the street or on the highway accosted him with the news, "Jefferson Davis married W. B. Howell's daughter today. What are the Whigs going to say about it?"

CHAPTER XIII

THE BRIDAL TOUR

After their marriage Jefferson Davis and his young bride went to visit his sister Mrs. Luther Smith at "Locust Grove" near Bayou Sara in Louisiana, where the first wife had been visiting when she died. Varina, from all accounts thought nothing of this, though some women might have found cause for secret resentment, surprise at least at his having selected this particular place for their first visit. Instead, every reference made to it indicates that she was sympathetic and deeply interested in the pathetic circumstance, repeated more than once to her by the sister-in-law. If she was a little curious about the marriage it was natural. She treasured until old age the beautiful story of the young wife in death singing in delirium her favorite air, "Fairy Bells," her song bringing the sick husband instantly to her side, though he himself was nearly as ill as the dying wife.[1]

"We carried flowers to her grave in the family burying-ground down by the garden before we left," she told a friend afterwards. In her *Memoir* of her husband she never forgot to pay a beautiful tribute to the young wife, and with far more feeling than women usually display under such circumstances. That Varina possessed a generous nature in early womanhood is the testimony of all who in any way came in contact with her.[2] She, also, was of a wholesome

[1] *A Memoir,* Vol. I.

[2] Conversations with descendants of contemporaries.

warm, sincere affection. Varina was instantly struck with their refinement of manner and speech and their unusual delicacy in matters of taste. The tender solicitude of the son for his mother, described as still beautiful at the age of eighty-five and of a poetic temperament greatly impressed her. His affection and courteous deference for his sisters, tall, slender and graceful, and well mannered like the brother, also pleased the young wife, who lived in a day when good breeding was demanded of the better class with an almost painful exactness.

Varina's perceptions were keen and penetrating, and, having in mind the best types studied and freely discussed and analyzed with her beloved "Great Heart," she discovered that there was in these gentle but firm and poiseful Welsh and Scotch people the old colonies had given to the lower South, from among their early immigrants, something infinitely fine and beautiful.

As she received their warm welcome, she says that she seemed in some indefinable way to draw strength from their calm, secure outlook. Writing of the old Scotch mother in later years, she says she "was fair to look upon. Her eyes were bright, her hair was a soft brown and her complexion was as clear and white as a child's." Of the sisters she says they "were both like their brother, Jefferson, spirited, intelligent women with strong convictions of duty and a wonderful inborn dignity."

And there was little doubt about their being gentlefolk of both Welsh and Scotch strains, though the Scotch mother rarely appears in her son's history as an influence. That Varina felt deeply the charm of the family circle was evident from snatches of conversation with her girl friends. "They are lovely, refined people," she commented, which, although it

was something of a platitude, summed up a definite characterization as few phrases could have done. And there are certain old, seemingly worn out phrases in our language whose power can never diminish, common place as they may sound to the ears, because of having been long associated with what we have come to rate as the best in life.

It was during this short but happy stay in the pleasant country home that Varina heard numerous little stories of her husband's childhood—his manly protection of his little sister Polly when but a very small boy, his self control in hours of great provocation among his playmates, and finally his flaying unmercifully a pugnacious playmate when he had become convinced that it was the right thing to do in some matter between them—this and much other she treasured through life, to be used one day in a memoir of him for posterity.[1]

After their visit to the relatives the young couple went by boat down the Mississippi to New Orleans, for their wedding trip proper it might be said, since it was generally understood that one must get entirely out of sight of kith and kin for it to be said that they had really had a bridal tour. Nearly every newly wedded pair in the lower Mississippi valley at that period went to New Orleans for what they called their "honeymoon." The bride, or as the case might be the groom, may have seen much of the United States, but for this special occasion nothing in its length or breadth compared with the quaint and beautiful old French city with its famous St. Charles which possessed, it is said,

[1] This last story is recorded in Mrs. Robert Houston's manuscript dealing with the early life of Jefferson Davis. The preparation of which she claimed is based on correspondence with Mrs. Davis.

the most elaborate bridal suite in any hotel in the North or South.

Varina remembered with keen delight her wedding trip Her impressions were always clear and distinct, and, even when of a light nature, stayed with her and were reflected in her conversation and reminiscences, bright and airy nothings that, people said, made her very entertaining. Even as a very young girl it is said that she was gifted in repartee which in middle life grew dangerously near to satire when ever the provocation became great. Her memory treasured small as well as great matters and from the full storehouse there was no trouble for her to reproduce youthful impressions in after years.

She was now in a state of ecstasy. She could hardly realize that one could be so happy. Though she had been to the old French city many times before her wedding trip, it was with no such feelings as she now experienced. She was not as extensively traveled as many of her young associates who frequently went to Washington and New York, and even once abroad during their young ladyhood. In fact she had never had very much of what is termed young ladyhood. Twelve years, some of the terms summer terms, as the private pupil of a deeply learned and somewhat exacting tutor had given her little time to join, to any great extent, in the amusements common to young girls of seventeen. It is true, as has been noted, there were several winter terms at Madame Greenland's school for young ladies in Philadelphia and these trips to and from Philadelphia had afforded her all the opportunity she had ever had of seeing the great country about which she had read so much and of which she had heard so much in the daily conversation around her. Still her extensive and systematic course of study and reading en-

abled her at times to put to shame impressions of eyewitnesses.

Although she was young and inexperienced her husband soon discovered that she could get on with comparative ease in any company. Her pleasure in her surroundings, her close observation, her interest in people amounting to curiosity though never of a common nature, gave promise of the spontaneity that marked her through life. This response to the outer and lighter things of life would always make her different from the man she loved, and with the romantic fervor of a generation of women wholly given to things of sentiment. The women of that day, however, though they indulged in a sort of eastern worship of their menfolk, at the same time, demanded that they themselves should be reverenced and shielded, sometimes if need be at the price of a duel, which made them wholly uneastern.

Prominently among the characteristics of the Southern women of that period were an intense sacrificial spirit in matters of deep moment and whimsical exactions in the instance of nonessentials. This was largely the type of women from which Varina had come. In her instance there would be no permanent effacement, no loss of individuality, unless some great crisis called for it, and then though freely yielded, it could only endure for the necessity of the hour. Hers was a nature capable of many interests, and the many-colored fabric of life would always be the one in which she would revel. When nature and circumstances no longer supplied her with colored threads she would weave the faded tints into as fascinating patterns as her active brain could devise. Jefferson Davis would never keep pace with her lively imaginings and quick discernments, but would be brightened and saved from the isolation that often overtakes purely

thoughtful minds. A few great aims and purposes would concern him. He would miss much of the passing show, a pageant that would rarely be lost on the woman at his side. Her delight in everything around her, her own happiness, her pride in him, her interest in the scenery of the river, in the life on the boat, were all visible in her manner and on her face, a face too youthful as yet to reveal the strength concealed beneath. Jefferson Davis, musing and filled with the wonder of his surroundings—the majestic water, the primeval forests, the pioneer struggle of the Anglo-American to plant themselves in Latin Colonial strongholds—doubtless saw a deeper beauty in his surroundings than did Varina. But with her the picture as it appeared was more obvious, clearer; the heaving billows, the heavy forests, the tall individual trees draped in moss, the high, red bluffs that occasionally frowned down upon them, the early spring's soft, green-gold garbing, the hundreds of boats and steamers ploughing the sullen waters about them, all filled her with delight. There was little in the entire country as majestic and picturesque. Her keen enjoyment of it was manifest in a vivaciousness that people said constituted one of her chief charms. But the picture, though she would always treasure it in memory, carried with it little deeper meaning than its outward beauty. To the man at her side it wove itself into his country's welfare. Great wealth, happy toiling millions both forecasting healthy progress and evolution that if undisturbed would fulfill the best dreams of men. The magnificent chateaux of France and the great country houses of England might boast more historic and heraldic trapping of past ages but there was not such wealth and luxury in them as existed here; no such outlook for the uplift of the masses. The poor,

struggling whites, and the lowly serving class that the unthinking called slaves, but who were in reality a race slowly coming forward from the dark environs of savagery, were both getting here the chance which had been denied them elsewhere. To him the picture was as it should be, filling him with an interest too deep for words because it envisioned a country that lay in his soul as definitely as it stretched befor his eyes. His intense nature made him feel deeply about most things. He was ardently in love with the young wife, and with an acute appreciation of the artistic it pleased him to note that she fitted in perfectly with her surroundings. With all her play of gay assumption, with him she was shy and confiding and already he had begun to call her "little wife." Her slim young body was yet in the undeveloped stage when the figures of young women seem smaller than they really are, and although a little above medium height, her slight form beside the tall figure of her husband made the term seem appropriate. Well over her recent illness she was once more full of gaiety and animation. It pleased the husband when people called her beautiful. Strangers he noticed singled her out for stolen glances of admiration.

The handsome pair, as they moved about the St. Charles Hotel, slightly self-conscious it must be admitted from feeling that they were being constantly observed, attracted much attention from the surging throng about them. It made her feel "very proud," she told her girl friends, to see with what deference people regarded her husband.[1] Although she felt that it was his due she was hardly prepared for such marked attention as was paid him. He was constantly being spoken of as the distinguished looking young

[1] Mrs. Coulson to Mrs. Harriet B. Kells.

brother of Joseph E. Davis—Joseph E. Davis whom all New Orleans knew as the master of "The Hurricane" in the "Davis Bend," and one of the largest slaveholders in the South. Varina heard them whispering the names of the brothers in the lobby and about the corridors and could catch the words, "Davis Bend," "The Hurricane," "Brierfield," "Best cotton planter in the State." But she was soon to find, somewhat to her dismay, from the company that gathered about them during their honeymoon that the younger brother had had other pathways made for him than those that led to the wood and field, surroundings in which she had fully expected for them to dwell in the future.

The St. Charles, at that time the most fashionable hotel in New Orleans, received people of note from everywhere, and at this particular time fortune had brought together a celebrated group which must have impressed the young wife deeply since she describes in after years in a clear, vivid picture the various members of it.

"A great many fashionable people," she wrote, "were there, but one I remember most clearly now was Mr. Wilde the poet, whose sonnet 'My Life is Like a Summer Rose' had made quite a local success. He was the uncle I think of the poet and aesthete Oscar Wilde. A soiree was given the evening we reached the hotel, and first among the guests his figure impressed me. He was then about thirty-four or five, slender and very refined in manner with flashing black eyes and a singular pallor of complexion. He was the first poet that I had ever encountered, for my journeys had been of the character so happily described since as 'Autour de ma Chambre.' While I was listening attentively to his sprightly talk and expecting his flow of conversation to become rythmical my husband came up bringing General

Gaines, who at the request of some lady friends was in full uniform. He was not a tall man, hardly—as my memory serves me—five feet ten inches. He had a fine military bearing, a good compact head, stern blue eyes and carried himself very proudly. His manner of talking was very peculiar; he halted between every two or three words. He was asked what he thought of General Scott's plan of retaining the French words of command in his 'System of Tactics.' He responded, 'I—a—think sir, that—a—the—a—English language is—a—sufficiently copious—to express—all the ideas that—a—General Scott will—a—ever have.' "

After chronicling this little humorous quip, having always enjoyed such light touches of humor, she does not forget to describe the General's wife in a very complimentary manner. Women were always safe in Varina's hands. And what better thing could be said of a woman. She rarely failed to see the good points, if there were any, in their makeup and sometimes sought to invest them with what she wanted to believe they posesssed. However, she might at the moment give vent to a well deserved rebuke for the lack of some standard she herself observed, in their absence or when she wrote of them she rarely became censorious, and never unfair.

That she was still unsophisticated at this age in many things, and in the presence of prominent people she frankly confesses. An instance of it, she says, was, after General Gaines had praised her husband and pronounced him an incomparable adjutant and a dashing young soldier she confided to him in a "foolish little way" what she thought of her husband and how much her "husband thought of and loved him." Even here, though making occasional youthful blunders, we find her at the first moments of wedded life

thinking not so much of herself as of her husband and knowing instinctively how to conserve his interests. She was at the time unconscious of all such little social improprieties as telling a stranger how much she admired her husband. Young married women, however, from queens down to peasants have been given to such weaknesses. If heaven were willing we might page Albert for confirmation. Much, too, is forgiven a beautiful woman that would be held against a homely one. Varina, with all her slim, graceful beauty and dark appealing eyes, might be guilty of nameless small blunders and silly utterances, and no one looking into the lovely face, more mobile than in after years, would be captious. But giving her full credit for the inexperience she claims for herself in her *Memoir* in many matters, it would hardly be true to say that she did not, in some degree at least, understand the meaning of such a confidence when she told her husband's friend how much he is loved and honored by the husband. But as yet we shall hold nothing against her. Hundreds of women in the history of the world, not excepting Victoria, whom this distinguished American woman in many of the domestic virtues resembled, have shown themselves to be ingenuous and at the same time artful enough on occasions.

CHAPTER XIV

BRIERFIELD

VARINA's wedding trip which had lasted six weeks seemed to her youthful and inexperienced mind very much like the bridal tours she had heard her grandmother say the celebrated Virginians took on such occasions. So distinguished had been their reception everywhere that, young as she was, it did not escape her that her husband commanded the instant attention of any company they entered. "It seemed," she confided to a girl friend afterwards, "like a fairy tale or a dream."

But with all her proud and happy experiences of the last few weeks a rarer one still awaited her, more in keeping with her present ambitions which at that time embraced only a happy and prosperous domestic state. This was their arrival at "Brierfield," her future home. She remembered that she had ridden past the house several times while visiting "The Hurricane" but held only an outline picture of it in her mind, and principally as the "Brierfield place" where Jefferson Davis lived when not at "The Hurricane." The friendly looking, simply constructed country house, bowered in several large oaks and flanked on either side by the dark fig, which clustered in irregular mounds about its modest "cat and clayed" walls, sent a thrill of joy through her so suddenly as to give the sensation of pain. One feels her intense love of it in the pathetic confession after having had so many homes, "but this one always seemed home to me."[1]

[1] *A Memoir,* Vol. I.

With her heart beating furiously, she says, she walked up the long brick walk by her husband's side listening to his "tender musical voice" welcoming her home. So this was "Brierfield" named for its many acres of wild briers which had perished under the plow, and, though now only a well ordered pastoral scene, was in the evolution of a great civilization to become one of the historic spots in the nation's history. But she could only know the present and of this her eager young heart made much. "Was ever any woman as happy?" she kept asking herself. One might ask if there was ever one, unless it had been Josephine of Martinique, who was more oblivious of the distinctions, vicissitudes and humiliations that destiny held in store for her. Follow willingly the man at her side any path that he might choose none who studies her can but believe that here, sheltered by a country roof, was her heart's home. It might be truer history than has been written of him to say that his heart throughout life was here also.

The Brierfield house had been planned and constructed by Jefferson Davis himself after his first marriage with a view to comfort in a warm climate, and that he might establish himself as a country gentleman. The buildings for the negroes—usually spoken of as the "Quarters" were located nearer the main house than was usual on the large plantations, that there might be, he said, a readier supervision of them in sickness. With the help of his slaves, and several white families of the poorer class, and with the constant advice of his faithful body servant, James Pemberton, he opened up and put in a high state of cultivation the large plantation during the eight years that he lived in retirement after the death of his first wife. The plantation had belonged to the large body of land known as the "Davis Bend" and

had been given him by his brother Joseph as a matter of conscience as well as generosity, in compensation for his interest in the family estate which the former still managed.[1]

Varina came of a race and a time that held all things sacred to the point of superstition which in any way related to the dead, and it was with a reverence touched with awe that she regarded the more intimate furnishings of the rather quaintly arranged home which had been presided over for a brief season by another, that other, too, who had occupied the same relation to her husband as she now did. Still youth with all its rose colored outlook and yearnings was hers and these in an intense nature like hers were strong. Though not in as robust health in these years as she afterwards became and of a slight, rather delicate physique her temperament was fearless, confident, qualities that in the end would do much to insure her a healthy body. No sooner than she had rested up from her wedding journey and had put away her things she was riding with him everywhere about the plantation. It was not long before she had accustomed herself to handle with composure and even with a feeling of pride the pretty tea things and silver that had belonged to the first young wife. Jefferson Davis, who had suffered and triumphed had assured her of the fitness of all things—finding her as her tutor had prophesied keenly receptive; that it was the part of wisdom to accept and make the best of life as it moved on from circumstance to action and from action to consequence. At her own request he had told her at length the story of his early marriage,

[1] Conversations with Col. Charles E. Hooker, Jefferson Davis' attorney.

and its romance and sad ending filled her eyes with tears not only at the time, but when she later related it to a friend.[1]

Having already discovered many things in his nature that she admired, and her tutor had taught her some analysis of character, she was now to find a more distinctive quality than she herself at her age could quite interpret. But as far as she could then go in her study of him she was content, enraptured. His intense love and admiration for the great outdoors, the vast country, and his delight in the simple life that she had discovered on her visit to "The Hurricane" caught her attention again when they had settled themselves at "Brierfield," and with a truer understanding of such things. She had in mind his ardor in public affairs and his fine poise in political contests both in triumph and defeat, and the energy and zest with which he now followed country life fascinated her. It corresponded with some deep chord in her own heart. Scarcely knowing why, she was thrilled with a happiness too deep for expression as she watched him, as the spring advanced, ride away with an eager face to the fields, fast greening with the tender leaf and blade of new crops. Coming herself of a race of land owners she found herself responding joyfully and naturally to the outdoor life that now surrounded her. She had also come of a family of good housekeepers. All Southern women were or endeavored to be—women who for the most part at least made their homes attractive. It is true that there was little personal drudgery performed at this day by the slave holding class, but home making and housekeeping were intensely enjoyed and many women made of them a fetich. Varina's marriage was based on the theory that she would keep house, and that

[1] *A Memoir,* Vol. I. Conversations with descendants of contemporaries.

she would keep a good one not one of her friends doubted. When a Northern writer quotes a disaffected and morbid lady who had traveled the South over to find, she extravagantly asserted, not a well kept home in the whole region, it is evident that she had never seen the Kempe home of Natchez nor many thousands like it throughout the South.[1] Hazardous and daring as she showed that she could be she could not have made that statement in the face of Louisa Graham Kempe's dislike of dust and disorder.[2] Since her arrival from Virginia that lady's passion for order and system, spotless linen and shining silver had amounted, her neighbors said, to a mania. Some pronounced her in old age "cracked" upon the subject. She transmitted her habits as well as her temperament to her offspring, and we find the Louisa Kempe Howell home nearly as well kept, though as conditions improved with less apparent effort, than her mother usually expended in this favorite occupation. Being more addicted to social pleasure than the mother, there was less of eye service. Servants there were plenty in the Howell home for every need and purpose, brought in from time to time from the Kempe plantations to be trained for house service.[3]

"Varina Howell and her brothers and sisters don't know where the water comes from that washes their hands," a talkative neighbor said, a colloquial phrase used often in referring to children of that day who were reared in homes of ease and plenty. Under such circumstances how daughters of such homes became good, orderly housekeepers and

[1] Fanny Kembal, whose bitterest arraignment of the Southern slaveholder was that he did not feed the little negro children on meat. Her descendants are today vegetarians or else advocating less meat as a diet even for adults.

[2] Conversations with descendents of contemporary families, Mrs. H. B. Kells, Miss Alice Lovell.

[3] Conversations with descendants of contemporaries.

home makers would remain a mystery had it not been proved countless times that it was through observation, some said "absorption" to say nothing of "inheritance." Contrary to the statement of a jealous critic, cited by a celebrated and fair-minded author, that "Varina Howell had done house work," it is contemporary record that she had never taken any part in the housekeeping before her marriage, there being numerous servants for one reason and no time left from her rather ambitious course of studies for another.[1] Nevertheless the young girl saw good housekeeping going on about her and had always enjoyed the peace and comfort of a well ordered home. It "ran in the family" people said "to make good wives" and good housekeeping was one of the signs.[2] It was very certain that the master of "Brierfield" would find her a good home maker. This she proved to be throughout life, and, as far as her many social duties permitted in later life, she was a good housekeeper. She was of an intensely energetic temperament, and one can very well believe that if at any time during her varied career no maid was present she would sweep her own room and make her own bed. It is very certain that she would not have left them in disorder. Grandmother Graham Kempe's horror of untidy bed rooms stayed with the granddaughter through life.

It may be set down then very confidently that Varina, though reared in the ease and luxury common to the homes of the Southern slaveholders, would, whether in Washington as a Cabinet officer's or United States Senator's wife, or in Richmond as the wife of the President of the Southern Confederacy, or here at "Brierfield" take some part in domestic affairs whenever it became necessary. As the mistress of "Brierfield" with servants perhaps too numerous, she,

[1] See *Wives* by Gamaliel Bradford.

[2] Conversations with descendants of contemporary families.

though little more than a child who had given all her years to study and books, now felt the family impulse to keep house.[1] That she found genuine pleasure in so doing is gathered from her *Memoir* in after years in which she described the Brierfield life. With a little touch of humor and pathos, moods in which eyes in later years view life's early effort, she tells us, "The rooms were of fair size and opened out on a paved brick gallery surrounded by lattice work."[2] It was her husband's "first experience as an architect." As he carried her over the house she says that he "dwelt especially on the great doors as most desirable for admitting plenty of cool air." "However," she humorously continues, "when they were opened the side of the house seemed to be taken down." "The fire-places were very deep and looked as though they had been built in Queen Elizabeth's time to roast a whole sheep."[3] "It was a cool house, comfortably furnished, and we passed many happy days there, enlivened by daily rides in which we indulged in many races when the road was smooth. The game was more abundant than chickens are now. There were wild geese in great flocks made fat by the waste corn in the fields, and wild ducks by the thousand: and white and blue cranes adorned almost every slough, standing on one leg among the immense lily pads that yet cover the low places with lemon-colored flowers as large as coffee cups. In these scenes," she repeats, "we passed many happy days," adding that they looked after the sick negroes, read and wrote, visited their neighbors, and went to "The Hurricane" every day. Mr. Joseph Davis became their most

[1] Girlhood confidences.

[2] The brick paved front gallery was not often seen in those days though the lattice work was a favorite device about the Southern home.

[3] *A Memoir,* Vol. I.

frequent visitor taking as much interest it seemed, in the affairs at "Brierfield" as he did in his own.

That Varina had wished this to be the manner of her life cannot be doubted. How circumstances bore them away from their plans—and the man was more eager for sacrifice than the woman—is a story of as turbulent a decade of our nation's history as that which saw Cromwell raised to power. But the story is not Cromwellian. Rather, there was a pompousness and pathos in the effort of the people of the revolting section, suggestive of Homeric grace and splendor. If the author is unnecessarily haunted by the fancy the critic must endure it, or else tear his hair.

In the life at "Brierfield," Varina realized her girlish dreams of happiness. Though naturally more ambitious than the average Southern wife who left most things of that nature to their husbands, she was at the present a part of her environment. It was the life that had, from generation to generation, gained a deep hold upon the people among whom she dwelt, and unconsciously and without effort it appealed to her as holding the best peace for woman. There is nothing like being accustomed to a thing to make it agreeable, to make it indispensible.

Of her life at "Brierfield," the young wife often told friends that it seemed hardly to be a reality, that, after the fashion of women's conversations of that day, she sometimes had distressing dreams that it was not true. There were few visits away from home of any duration. Little visits to Natchez to spend several days with her parents, and to see among her other friends her old tutor were pleasures enjoyed at intervals. She sometimes had her girl friends and more frequently the young Howell brothers and sisters with her for a short stay "on the farm" she laughingly

told them.[1] For the greater portion of her time she was busy with the life at "Brierfield." To keep the house in perfect order, to plant flowers sent her from everywhere—it was soon noised about among the neighbors that "she loved them," to teach the house servants all the small niceties of service, to personally visit the sick negroes, to sympathize with them when death visited their homes and to select what they would wear at marriages and births, these were among the numerous duties that she assigned herself as mistress of "Brierfield."

The negroes spoke of her with affection saying among themselves with much pride that "Mars Jeff's got de priddiest of de Davis wives so fur ez we's saw, an' smart ain no name fur it." Many of their children were named for her and all were visited by her in sickness. With some of them recollections of the first wife had not quite faded, and in a dim, vague way they associated the second with the first, one of the field hands having been heard to say, "I spec Gin'l Taylor gwine fech all his folks down heah nex Chrismus." To visit ones relatives at the Christmas season was a custom as fixed in their minds as was the habit of the wild geese to fly southward in winter. The master of "The Hurricane" had kept up the custom since their earliest recollection of the place and their greatest idea of festivity was associated with that season. In fact it was a time for general visiting among both black and white.[2]

Varina Howell Davis, the neighbors said was "in her glory keeping the Brierfield house while her husband kept the plantation." They were not only great favorites with their

[1] *A Memoir,* Vol. I. Conversations with descendants of contemporary families.

[2] Reminiscences of Mrs. R. Houston.

slaves, but with the white people both rich and poor of the river country. Varina was learning to look upon the poor whites with less aversion. On fine saddle horses they rode about the fields and across country with the grace and ease that marked a people who had long been lovers of the land, and wherever they went they were followed by admiring eyes. There was not a tree in the orchard nor a young lilac sprout growing beside the parent bush that Varina and her husband did not know about and talk about. The young, thoroughbred colt, the day old calf, the fractious young heifer, the lame steer and in fact everything going on about the place was known to her as well as to the husband.[1]

They spent their evenings in the well stored library, where they read constantly to each other and discussed many subjects, the husband improving her French while she surprised him with her remarkable knowledge of Latin. All through their lives one finds them reading to each other. Having in the main similar tastes they found each others society very congenial, mirroring a sympathy and an adaption that lasted through life. In the science of government as well as in military matters she laughingly confessed her limitations. Touching the former, her strong Whig teachings had colored her thought so deeply, as it did that of all the "gentle folk" of Natchez, that even after she conscientiously admitted the larger humanity and brotherhood of democracy she sometimes on these evenings in their library found herself disputing, and sometimes with a hot flush, some point in American government with her husband. "Great Heart" had taught her to think for herself and her husband was pleased, and encouraged her to continue doing so, though he sometimes, she says, pronounced her "an aristocrat of the deepest dye."

[1] Conversations with descendants of contemporary families.

With his Kentucky breeding and education and his many personal graces she had little advantage of the husband in this respect, if it could be called an advantage. One hardly knows after all whether the thick petaled Burbank rose has any advantage over the sweet-smelling garden variety or not.

That Varina was an aristocrat by birth, tradition and education is true, but one could never accuse her of pretentiousness, a trait that had not at that period shown itself to any great extent in the better class of Southern society. They were proud and pompous but rarely pretentious.

The Brierfield life progressed happily as the spring advanced, but even in this tranquil bay, in which she through life found harbor at short and precious intervals, Varina realized that there were outside influences at work to break up their happy country life. Amid its many delights and diversions—the housekeeping, the home making, the management of their slaves of which she gives a fascinating picture in after years, filled with many quaint sayings and humorous stories of the negroes and white help—amid it all there came interruptions from the outside—the great world that has to be served and will not take a refusal. Political callers dropped in for dinner or supper at unexpected times; the mail grew heavy and had to be carefully read, discussed and answered. Would the young wife prove equal to the coming responsibilities or would she insist that life should be as *she* would have it, preferring to remain the active, happy country woman, prizing more than all else a domestic sphere. Left strictly to her own choice it is easy to believe that she would have preferred the contentment of a private home and domestic pursuits. She had proved herself much of a success at home making, and had confided to her dearest girl friends that she wanted children and would never be satisfied with-

out them even as happy as she already was. Still, one cannot forget that twelve years of intensive study under an ambitious, learned and public spirited teacher would have its influence, silent and inactive as it might be in comparison with joys common to youth.

But stronger than all else, than her pride in being mistress of "Brierfield," than any influence and teaching of her beloved "Great Heart," was the loyalty of the woman's nature —a loyalty that would keep her trustful, faithful whatever the demand might be. Enough that the man she loved with a passion unknown to any but great natures saw fit to turn his feet towards the crowded cities, she would follow —and she did follow to the end.

She would always, in acute moments filled with distress and great loneliness, recall the utter peace and contentment of the river home—the scent of lilacs, the tinkling music of the bell coming over the pastures, the open fields reaching away to the forest along the great river, the piccaninnies scampering out of the rows of whitewashed cabins calling to their master for a hand shake, the tall figure leaning from the saddle to clasp the little black hands reached fearlessly up to him, and she standing on the rose wreathed brick gallery of the quaint country house with the morning light streaming about her—she would recall it all after the fashion of her sex lovingly and sometimes in tears. But now, as fair as it was, she would shut her eyes to it, forego it, turn away from it, for living by the side of one capable of much sacrifice she too, who had the latent power in her own nature, would grow to be sacrificial. The study of her life reveals one of continual sacrifice, though her cheerful, almost gay, manner of making sacrifices robbed her of much of the glory that attaches to the relinquishments and offerings of those who demand adulation for their good deeds.

CHAPTER XV

IN PUBLIC LIFE. VISIT OF CALHOUN

Amid all the happy rural entertainment and interests as master and mistress of "Brierfield," Varina and her husband continued to read the papers and letters eagerly as they came to them in bulky packages from all over the State, packages that became bulkier as the summer advanced. It seemed now a certainty that the calm of country life would soon be broken, since every issue of the papers throughout the State contained calls for the husband to enter political life.

They had had a perfect season. Spring had faded into summer, the crops had been "laid by," the orchards were hanging with fruit in every stage of ripening, the horses and mules, James Pemberton, the trusted foreman, informed his master, were "picking up" after the spring work, the cattle growing fatter and sleeker in the lush green pastures, and the flowers, the myrtle, syringa and star jassamine blooming with more languorous grace, when the call to public life became so insistent that it could no longer be ignored. The young mistress of it all was in as idyllic state of mind as one could possibly be. Seemingly no aspiration, other than that which had to do with the present, stirred her thought. But it might be set down for ignorance of human nature, or else perversion, for one to say that a spark of more vital energy did not slumber in Varina's breast than that which was expended in the simple, pastoral life about her, however she may have preferred at the time, and at many other times, the peace and contentment of a purely domestic state.

Scarcely before she could realize it, she was in the midst of change. In Mississippi, 1845 was the year for the nomination of candidates for seats in the Twenty-ninth Congress. Jefferson Davis had made a deep impression on the public mind in the summer of 1844 in his general canvass of the State as an elector for James K. Polk. Both as a public speaker and as a political factor, he was fast becoming recognized in party circles. The Whigs feared the young Democratic leader more than any other influence of his party. Too, many strong Whig families, through his marriage, had now been brought to his side, families that the Whigs could illy aford to lose from their ranks.

Although her brief experience before her marriage of the strife usual to political contests had been very distasteful to Varina, she did not now shrink from the thought of public position as she had done in the first instance. True, she was supremely happy in the life usual to the wives and daughters of wealthy planters, but when the election for Congressional honors came to him almost as a compliment, contemporaries have said, she eagerly enough responded, and with some show of pride, since the haughty Whig antagonists of Democratic policies had not been sparing with taunts and ridicule.

Though triumphant, she still smarted under any criticism of her husband, and so finely strung and sensitive was her nature, that she felt the sting of partisan politics throughout life.[1] With a sincerity that evinces even at the late day of the *Memoir* regret and pain, she wrote of her early experience, "Then I began to know the bitterness of being a politician's wife, that it meant long absences, pecuniary depletion from ruinous absenteeism, illness from exposure, misconcep-

[1] Confidences after the Confederacy with friends at Natchez.

tions, defamation of character, everything which darkens the sunlight and contracts the happy sphere of home."[1]

And this was to be her future, a future that was to stand in striking contrast with the happy intervals, all too brief for her, in the quiet river home. But hers was a nature that develops with every trial new powers of endurance, refusing to be overpowered or frustrated by circumstances. Though wounded, as it were, to the bone, she would hide it with the little light laughter that the world sometimes mistakes for unconcern. She would have made a good soldier, as the men of her family had done, and like all good soldiers, she would have known how to wear the mask; as a woman, she would appear "ever brave and smiling," as one said of her who knew her well. For one of her age, her judgment was good as to what mattered or didn't matter. From the clean, wholesome races of the British Isles, she had inherited characteristics and virtues that found rich development in the atmosphere of this favored region of America. She would have filled with distinction the place of Victoria, her contemporary, and would have far out shown her in a question of mental ability and culture and in the matter of personal attraction. There were some occasions in her life when Elizabeth never carried her head with more distinction.

As the days passed, though still under the charm of the Brierfield life, Varina found herself taking an intense interest in her husband's political affairs which still had not settled into the certainty of a career. Without seeking his political followers with the express purpose of binding them in a closer tie to his standard, she did seek them out of appreciation for their friendship and made much of them in

[1] *A Memoir*, Vol. I.

an agreeable, engaging manner. And had not her good and thoughtful parents cautioned her to be kind to "her husband's friends," and was not parental advice heeded at that time? Varina was open minded, too, for one so young and possessed of strong individuality. An instance of this is early shown in her career when she first met her husband's most celebrated friend, the great Calhoun of South Carolina, who was at that time the leader of the Democracy of the South. Her first impulse was to go back to her attitude towards national governmental policies of which she had been so good a pupil under the tutelage of her instructor, an armor she perhaps felt she needed in the presence of this "high priest and stern zealot of democracy." She had never met so great a celebrity. She must let him know that she was an aristocrat. By showing him her "Whig proclivities" she felt he would understand her family's social position. That much was their due. But in an instant she had recognized his power. When he, she says "with head erect cast his eagle eyes over the crowd I felt like rising up to do homage to a king among men."[1]

Calhoun on a visit to the State met her for the first time at Vicksburg where Jefferson Davis had gone to introduce the great standard bearer of democracy to an over-flowing audience. No sooner than Varina had been in his presence she felt her prejudices giving way to admiration, veneration. He in return was charmed with her. Her beauty, intellect and pleasing personality impressed him deeply, for with all his detachment, and she says he was "without a spark of gallantry," he was not unmindful of beauty and charm in woman. He readily perceived that here was beauty

[1] *A Memoir*, Vol. I.

that would be singled out in any crowd and intellect far above that of most women of that day.

The reception of the great leader was a brilliant affair for the Democrats. For fifty miles around from the thriving river towns and the big plantations both Democrat and Whig had gathered, and soon the city overflowed with them. They had been coming, too, all day from the far inland towns and small farms. Everywhere the Whig gentry of the old Natchez District were seen in knots and groups eyeing with some surprise and concern the democratic outpouring, the masses that gathered to welcome their leader, a leader who they themselves conceded to be one of the greatest then in the public life of America. It was not only a numerous but in many instances an elegant company that assembled in the large public hall. Varina had never witnessed such a gathering of the people of the State. True she had seen notable assemblages of a more social nature gather in the city of Natchez made up principally of Whig adherents, but here were both Whigs and Democrats coming together in a great concourse to listen to the ablest living defender of democracy.

The speaker she says, was late and the audience during the interval of waiting surged about restlessly something in the manner as bees stir in the air before settling. She could but be conscious of the fact that she was attracting almost as much attention from the audience, especially from the female portion, as her husband who, it was known, would deliver the welcome address. From all over the hall she saw eyes turned in her direction and almost at her elbow people were whispering, "There's Mrs. Jefferson Davis,—beautiful isn't she?" Dazzled and a little disconcerted by the brilliancy and blare around her, and not being experienced enough

among strangers to bear herself with the confidence which she was rarely in later life without, she as soon as her husband was called away, attached herself in some relief to friends, Dr. William Gunn and his wife. The latter she describes as being young and very handsome. Trivial as was this incident in her early life it indicates an ability to extricate herself from any unpleasant situation.

The boat was late which was to bring the orator to the city and the audience continued to await his arrival impatiently. Varina outwardly kept her poise though every nerve at times sang as if it had been scraped as she thought of the part her husband was to play in the evening's exercises.[1] "Suddenly," she says, "the wide door opened and amid much excitement craning of necks and whisperings the great man entered." She could see her husband's tall slender figure with graceful head lifted above the rest of the committee as they conducted the speaker to the stand.

Her own impressions of the distinguished visitor at that time have been recorded with a facile pen. "His head," she wrote, "was rather long than broad, the ears were placed low upon it, the depth from front to back was very great, his forehead was low, steep, and beetled squarely over the most glorious pair of yellow brown eyes that seemed to have a light inherent in themselves; they looked steadily out from under bushy eyebrows that made the deep sockets look still more sunken. When excited the pupils filled the iris and made his eyes seem black. He lowered them less than any one I have ever seen; they were steadily bent on the object with which he was engaged; indeed on some people they had an almost mesmeric power. He wore his thick hair all the same length, and rather long, combed straight back from his forehead. This, with his brilliant eyes and unflinching

[1] Conversation. *A Memoir*, Vol. I.

gaze, gave his head the expression of an eagle's. His mouth was wide and straight; he rarely smiled, and the firm, square chin and grave manner made a personality striking in the extreme. He was tall and slenderly built, quick and alert in both speech and movement, but mind and body was so equally and rarely adjusted to each other that no dignity could be more supreme than Mr. Calhoun's. His voice was not musical; it was the voice of a professor of mathematics, and suited his didactic discourse admirably. He made few gestures, but those nervous, gentlemanly hands seemed to point the way to empire. He always appeared to me rather as a moral and mental abstraction than a politician, and it was impossible, knowing him well, to associate him with mere personal ambition. His theories and his sense alone dominated him."

It was the first time that she had heard her husband make a public address. She had been deeply interested in the effort. At "Brierfield" several days had been spent in its preparation, since the welcome address to the South Carolina statesman must not be one of an ordinary style and character. Besides it was an opportunity also for the expression of personal views her husband wished to give out to the public in his own interests, and Varina, eager as any young wife could possibly be, had hovered near acting as copyist and listening with pride until the speech had been prepared. Recalling in after years the exciting incident she says, "Now the forthcoming speech of welcome was to be delivered, and I was for the first time to hear my husband address an assembly." That both were in some dread of it is seen in the fact that, "he had," she says, "asked me not to look at him while speaking, so I heard only his beautiful voice, expressive of respectful regard in every tone." "He greeted the great

statesman with a few words of personal and general welcome, and then began, in rather a slow manner, evidently trying to remember the aforesaid speech; but as he progressed his voice grew round and clearer until it filled the large hall to the echo. Without pausing for a word, he passed in rapid review the tariff, the currency, the probable addition of Texas to the Union, which was then an exciting theme, as there were many opponents of the measure. He did not even look askance at nullification, or internal improvements by the General Government, but made a strong appeal for strict construction of the Constitution, and an eloquent statement of the power, the glory, and the danger of our country; a short review of Mr. Calhoun's career as Secretary of War, Senator, and Vice-President; and then came to the homestretch with States' rights sails all set and Mr. Calhoun at the helm."

"From that day forth," she continues in her *Memoir,* "no speech was ever written for delivery. Dates and names were jotted down on two or three inches of paper, and these sufficed." "Mr. Davis' speeches," she says, "never read as they were delivered; he spoke fast, and thoughts crowded each other closely; a certain magnetism of manner and the exceeding beauty and charm of his voice moved the multitude, and there were apparently no inattentive or indifferent listeners. He had one power that I have never seen excelled; while speaking, he took in the individuality of the crowd, and seeing doubt or a lack of coincidence with him in their faces, he answered the mental dissonance with arguments addressed to the case in their minds. He was never tiresome, because, as he said, he gave close attention to the necessity of stopping when he was done. Only so much of his eloquence has survived as was indifferently reported. The

spirit of the graceful periods was lost. He was a parenthetical speaker, which was a defect in a written oration, but it did not, when uttered, impair the quality of his speeches, but rather added a charm when accentuated by his voice and gracious manner. At first his style was ornate, and poetry and fiction were pressed from his crowded memory into service; but it soon changed into a plain and stronger cast of what he considered to be, and doubtless was, the higher kind of oratory. His extempore addresses are models of grace and ready command of language."

It is thus that she wrote of him in after years in her remarkable and lengthy *Memoir* and the same adoration with which she as a wife of but a few months regarded him, is patent throughout.

Of Mr. Calhoun she wrote interestingly that he "made no appeals to any emotion." The duty of a citizen to the State was his theme; the reward he offered was the consciousness of having performed it faithfully. He spoke so fast, in words so concise, that the loss of one or two rendered it hard to follow him. He borrowed nothing from the style or thoughts of authors of the past or present. It was the chart of his faith which he turned toward us and explained its bearings, taking it for granted we were to sail with him: and I do not think any one present would have hesitated then to do so. When the applause which followed subsided a little, he passed from one lady to another, saying to each a few words without a trace of gallantry; yet, though he was grey and much emaciated, the fire within made him seem hardly to have reached middle life. He devoted a little more time than to others to the wife of the orator of the evening, and his manner was so paternal and full of indulgent sympathy that I found myself telling him what a grief it was to contemplate

my first separation from my mother. He spoke of a daughter named Cornelia, near my age, who loved him better than any one else, and told some little anecdotes of her, and of his brilliant Anna, who married Mr. Clemsen.

"Thus," she continues, "began a friendship which lasted through life, and was attested by long letters on governmental subjects, written as though to an intellectual equal. It was one of the sources of his power over the youth of the country that he assumed nothing except a universal, honest, co-intelligence between him and the world, and his conversation with a girl was on the same subjects as with a statesman. His perceptions were so quick, however, that after a few words in response to him he would interject, 'Yes, yes, I know what you mean,' and proceed to answer at once to the unexpressed opinion. His letters were all lost during the war; but it was I and not posterity that sustained the misfortune, for his handwriting, though it looked neat, was almost undecipherable. I once sent him back a letter to read for me, and he responded, 'I know what I think on this subject, but cannot decipher what I wrote.' "

To infer that Varina did not enjoy the new prospect unfolding before her eyes, eyes so full of keen interest in life, would be untrue, and also unfair to her. As sincere as she had been when she, with a childish frankness that would have been amusing to the blasè even of her day, confided to Mr. Calhoun that it would be a sore trial for her to leave her mother—family love and a dependence upon it was a strong trait of her character, she turned her eyes eagerly enough upon the scene about her. As much as she had become attached to "Brierfield"—the spot that she had labored to make attractive with a woman's taste and skill, the broad fields and pastures, the great river with its heavy ever-

green forests, the blue heron and pelican in the lilied marshes, the wild geese flying overhead, the grackle with the sunlight turning their wings to green gold, the little fruit trees that she was growing from seed her mother had sent her from the old Kempe orchards, the favorite saddle horses, the domestic fowls from the stately peacock down to the brown bantams that the piccaninnies had brought her with gleaming white teeth, the faithful servants who so readily complied with her every wish, the peace and contentment of the closing day and the buoyancy and fair outlook of the morning—as much as these things bound her—and they had become a part of her, she still lost nothing of the new prospect spread out before her. No young woman with more interest in her surroundings ever attended a political reception. But as sincerely as she sought to make herself agreeable to her husband's friends, one must admit, that, even in the instance of Mr. Calhoun, the fact that they were her husband's friends had something to do with melting her prejudices for the new democracy which she had been taught from infancy to suspicion and view with contempt.

CHAPTER XVI

ACCOMPANIES HER HUSBAND TO WASHINGTON

The political meeting at Vicksburg proved to be a pleasant experience for Varina, the various details of which it gave her great delight to describe to her friends. Though still too youthful to view life and its pleasures with much more than mere girlish delight, the fact that she had not only won the admiration and approval of her husband's numerous friends throughout the State, but that, also, of the distinguished Calhoun, pleased her. It was no small triumph for a young woman on her first public appearance in political circles where her husband was a central figure. She was wise enough even at that period to have some appreciation of its value to him. And even if she had not been wise enough to be conscious of this last, had she not heard them all about her saying in undertones, "What a fine young woman!"—"How the Whigs will flock to Jefferson Davis from now on." "Her people are all Whigs they say." "Daughter of William B. Howell of Natchez;" "Good looking too."[1] Thus the world does its part in shaping us.

Excepting her husband no one was more pleased with Varina's first social triumph among his political friends than his brother, Mr. Joseph Davis, who had attended the meeting as one of the most prominent Democrats of the river section of the State. Next to his pride in his young brother's successful effort of the evening was that which he felt in dis-

[1] Girlhood confidences.

covering the crowd's evident admiration of the young wife. Nor was it at all strange—had he not "done all in his power" people said, "to make the match."

Without returning to "Brierfield," following the public reception to Calhoun, Varina left Vicksburg with her husband for Wheeling the day after the speaking. They went by boat and had with them Miss Lucy Bradford, Jefferson Davis' young niece for whom Varina had formed a warm attachement. At this season everybody traveled the western route in going to Washington, that being preferred to the Southern road, which carried them up from New Orleans through Alabama and Georgia to Charleston and Norfolk, and embracing every mode or transportation then common to the country. In fact both routes included water, stage coach and detached lines of new railroad, and passed through sparsely settled regions which made travel very difficult and sometimes dangerous. Varina's health had not been good since her severe illness before her marriage, and they had decided to take a route that promised a few comforts at least, although this one proved rough enough in the end. That it was a terrible experience for the whole party one can readily believe from the description given of it in after years by the young wife. When they reached what she says the captain called the "Norrows" they found the Ohio at this point filled with ice. Boats sometime could not move for several days. Floating ice chunks had struck the sides of their boat more than once in the perilous ascent, and now that these had ceased to craunch against it with "a digging blow" that sent it plunging and reeling and threatened at times to pierce its sides, they found themselves tied up in solid sheets of ice waiting for a thaw. It was then that Varina came in closer personal contact with what she was

calling "the democratic masses." How would she behave? Naturally of a gay and sprightly temperament she soon convinced her husband that she could extract humor and merriment out of the roughest experiences of life. That he responded to her mood is seen from her own account of the trip.[1] All loneliness and solitude seemed to have fallen from him giving him back his ardent youth.. He was very handsome and she was madly in love with him, and had begun calling him pet names of her own improvisation. The one of "Banny" she seemed to like better than any and this she continued to call him through life, and amid the saddest circumstances as well as when their lives flowed smoothly. He was now calling her "Winnie" and the name seemed especially suited to her, gay and winsome and possessed of more than ordinary beauty. She never said why she called him "Banny" nor from where she got the name, but one is led to believe that it was coined in some happy moment. Wives sometimes do such things, especially those very much in love as was the young Varina.

It pleased her husband greatly to see her in such cheerful spirits, and full of the spirit of adventure himself, he entered with zest into the many little occurrences of the unusual situation. Their neighbors on the boat, most of them of the poorer pioneer type, soon began to furnish sources of amusement. The Pilot's wife who had been given a cabin passage in compliment to her cheerful and motherly attitude towards the travelers served as a rich fund upon which to draw during the week of dull anchorage in the ice floes of the Ohio. Though never keeping a diary Varina's fine, clear, mind recorded every circumstance and impression of her early youth and kept these unblurred through life.

[1] *A Memoir*, Vol. I.

The Pilot's wife soon came to be very inquisitive about the distinguished looking trio on the boat. With eyes that had grown shrewd from much travel among all classes she perceived that they were not of the type one met every day. More than once she had exclaimed curiously and in some condemnation in the hearing of those near her that she could not see "what on airth that man was takin' them delicate, puny-looking gals through all that cold fur." The remark besides other statements leaves the impression that Varina was not in as good health as she should have been for the voyage. Her grace and animation, however, made up for loss of vigorous health. Highly amused at the bluff Mrs. McGruggy's blunt criticism she set about helping her husband enjoy the tart humor the frank and naive poor whites so richly offer from their otherwise slim stores. Both the man and woman were kindly, forgiving readily and responding warmly to overtures of friendliness. A smile or two from Varina and the hearty Pilot's wife forgot that she had ever felt peeved at the "high falutin airs and manners" of the young couple and melted immediately. In the next few days she had told them all about herself and in numerous ways sought to make amends for her criticism. Not content to impress upon them her liking and admiration she was determined to give them something by which she would be remembered. This came in the shape of some fine apricot seed. With hearts still holding "Brierfield" above any spot that could be called home Varina and her husband carefully preserved the seed in their trunks at Washington and carried them back, to in after years see a handsome tree bear fruit for nine years under the name of the "Pilot's Wife." Few people going out to face a new and entirely different prospect in life would have derived as

much genuine pleasure out of as small an incident. Added to the disposition for thrift, which was moderately strong in both, a wholesome love of the natural and simple life had been the cause of many orchard trees growing at "Brierfield," seed of which had been gathered in many such ways. Small, natural, and what might seem to the sophisticated, trivial pleasures, seemed to have made deep impressions upon both husband and wife helping them to extract from life simple, primal enjoyments not artificialized by social demands nor inventions. This instinctive delight in the natural blessings of life would help to dispel much of the gloom that was destined to shadow their lives in future years. An orchard in bloom or in fruit was to them an orchard still whether it was viewed through their tears or their smiles. In this particular they were alike.

That the trip to Washington had further adventures of a somewhat serious nature the following from her *Memoir* of her husband shows: "Eventually," she says, "a very small boat came alongside of ours with great puffing and ringing of bells; we were transferred to her as of lighter draft. She puffed and steamed all night, and in the morning had only reached the south bank, in sight of the boat we had left. Then her wheels ceased to revolve and we had to debark and continue our journey, at the imminent risk of our lives, on a rough wood-sled with oaken runners, sitting on our trunks. The member of Congress from South Mississippi, Colonel Robert N. Roberts, a kind and very shrewd and observant old gentleman, much respected and entirely trusted by his constituents in Mississippi, was our only companion. The narrow road, slanting sidewise, covered with frozen snow, ran about half-way up the side of a mountain on one side, and sloped on the other steeply to the river. When a quarter

of the journey had been traversed the sled slipped over, and we were precipitated down a bank twenty feet beneath the road, and our trunks followed their owners at a break-neck pace. Colonel Roberts, in his fall, struck a tree and broke a rib, and I sustained severe contusions about the head. After a day's travel we stopped for the night at 'Cresap's House,' on the Ohio River, a historic place. In the course of the evening the hostess—a handsome, bright-eyed woman, in a large white muslin turban, being stirred by some vague memory, asked my servant to tell her my maiden name; and then related how my father and mother, and Mr. Joseph E. Davis, had spent the night there, when going through the wilderness just nineteen years before. When my husband inquired why she remembered them so well, she answered, 'They were so beautiful and so cheerful, I have never forgotten them, and your voices are the same.' When we reached Wheeling my husband's feet, of which he had not complained, were frozen, and Colonel Roberts suffered much. A line of stages ran over the Alleghany Mountains to take passengers to Brownsville, and a little boat plied from there to Pittsburg. The people who traversed that road and survived, certainly should properly have been designated 'the fittest,' for we were thrown very often up to the roof of the stage, and the old vehicle creaked and groaned audibly in concert with our exclamations of pain or terror within. When the snow was deep, the wheels slipped to the very verge of precipices so steep that it made one dizzy to contemplate them even from a vantage-point of safety. On several occasions the gentlemen jumped out and chocked the wheels, while the coachman whipped his horses and turned them across the road to hold the stage back; but the mountains and the snow-laden firs that cling to their sides were

JEFFERSON DAVIS AND MRS. DAVIS, 1849.

worth the risk for one glance at their array. After three weeks of peril, discomfort, and intense cold, during which we were obliged to eat our life-long supply of worst with maple syrup for condiment, we reached Washington more dead than alive."

Under all the hardships Varina says her husband was cheerful; always ready with some pleasant story, making light of the discomforts, and sometimes singing "We'll tough it out till morning." "When exhortations and jests failed, he went into the little wayside inns and bought candy and milk, and told us to drink deep and forget our sorrows. Once, when hard-boiled eggs without salt were given us, as we were ruefully contemplating the luncheon he called out, theatrically 'What is the province of salt? 'Salt seasons dainties, blunts the saber's edge."

"Half-dead with fatigue, but trying" their "best to command his respect by being stoical, though bruised black and blue," she says they, "arrived in Washington, and took temporary lodgings at the National Hotel on Pennsylvania Avenue."

CHAPTER XVII

FIRST GLIMPSES OF WASHINGTON

VARINA found her life as suddenly changed from that she had known at "Brierfield" as one would coming upon a city when supposing their road lay through an open country. She had expected her life on reaching womanhood to be as that of other women about her—that is, marriage, a plantation, servants, housekeeping, entertaining, and certainly children, all of which held a thousand nameless joys and graces for the young women of the South of that period. This new road that circumstances had conspired to lay out for her, as all know, became in time to be a dreadful experience. Her tutor, to whom she continued through life to quote as authority, once told her that there was nothing that the brain had conceived in the whole realm of fiction that equalled reality and she must train herself to be ready for any condition life might present. They had been reading, "Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came," she said, when he exclaimed that it was little else than a fantasy and imagery of life. It was unusual for him to have a prophetic outlook and she had cause to recall the peculiar expression on his face many times in after years.[1]

But unexpected as life's changes might occur she would do much towards accepting them as the inevitable, if not resigned to them; would even be heard saying, sometimes lightly but more often devoutly, that they were "blessings in

[1] Confidences of girlhood.

disguise." Love would immeasurably soften even the severest experiences, "dispensations of an all wise Providence" they of that day firmly believed them to be, and to be accepted in faith and with serenity. Love was the dominant motive of her being, love of God, of husband, of kindred, of friends, of nature. Tried in what crucibles it might be it would never turn to ashes.

Varina, with the people of her day, was strictly orthodox, believed in the christian's heaven and in both punishment and reward hereafter, but she was without cant and often scornful of its hypocracies and amused at its subterfuges. So fixed, however, were her faiths and emotions in the religious observances of the day that these proved an unfailing source of comfort throughout life. The husband, too, had solved for himself sufficiently clear to allay any questioning and doubt all "intellectual difficulties."[1] That the wife's firmly rooted belief in God's direct supervision of all the affairs of men deepened his religious sentiment is evident in the simple and genuine expression of his faiths which bore such a strong resemblance to her own.

They were now in the National Capital, and Jefferson Davis among the new members of the lower house of Congress had taken his seat in that body in December after their arrival. With other ladies belonging to the Congressional circles Varina witnessed the ceremonies on the assembling of Congress. It was the first imposing public function of a national character that she had ever viewed. While her poise was increasing for one so young and of such limited experience she was conscious of some helplessness at times amid the unusual spectacle. She was beginning, however, to take an eager interest in her husband's public success

[1] "Wives" by Gamaliel Bradford.

and welfare, and her keen eyes constantly sought his tall, spare figure as he mingled with the surging throng. It represented a vaster one of the lusty young nation. From the North and South and the Middle West—the farther West was still under foreign dominion, they had come, each bringing with him some peculiarity common to his section. Varina's swift eyes took in every phase of the notable occasion and being of a section where men were if anything *distingue* in appearance it gave her much secret satisfaction to see how her husband's appearance affected the people about him. Careful of the way her own lace trimmed black silk fitted her slender figure she was still more eager about every little detail of the dress of her lover. That he was "perfect" was one way of her expressing her pride in him, and the letters she sent home were full of praise of all he did and said. From the first they had been very congenial, and with the same keen zest that she had planted orchard and garden seed with him, she now entered into the excitement and ceremonies incident to his installation in public life. Though the lighter side of their future social life would appeal to her more than to the husband, and she would extract more small pleasure out of its festivities, her enjoyment of all intellectual pursuits, even of those of a difficult nature requiring real drudgery, was deep, especially when these in any way related to him It did not take their small circle of new friends at the National Hotel long to discover that Varina was wholly absorbed in her husband. Handsome and distinguished looking in appearance, and of a kindly but slightly reserved manner that "piqued interest," he in return was devoted to the young wife and the two attracted much favorable attention on their first appearance in public life. It was not to be expected that in

time members of their circle, both male and female, would not variously comment, "He is much older and it will tell in after years, and then she will not be so foolish about him," contemporaries have said was among the comments. But when was it, as a noted author has observed in substance, that a young, or any woman, happy in her marital relations did not become at times a subject for humorous or else spiteful comment from the blasé and disillusioned? The state seems to them so preposterous that it arouses either their humor or satire, and sometimes their resentment.

Varina at this time cared little for criticism, and in fact had little of it to contend with. She was thoroughly in love with a very fascinating husband and too happy to give much thought to anything else. Jefferson Davis, though a man of delicate physique and health had about him the manner and physical appearance of youth that even as a much older man would make him seem a suitable companion in age for a wife much younger than himself. When old age had broken him, she, too, was an old, woman, though she sometimes realized with a great fear that in the nature of things, if life reached its allotted span, her tenure of it was one much longer than his. Today they made a pair to all eyes that was the happiest of complements. If the man was somewhat more used to the outside world, the woman was attractive, intellectual, witty and sociable enough to be forgiven any small mistakes she might make. Besides he was always there to help her and she was an apt pupil. She deferred to him in all things and the habit continued to the last, even when she had proved herself capable of deciding for herself.[1]

That she was happy and full of the life about her, enjoying with a natural zest all of its lighter phases as well as its

[1] "Wives" by Gamaliel Bradford.

deeper significances, and beginning even at this early age to make a close study of the people around her, we gather from the following charming reminiscences of her first impressions of life at the National Capital at this time. "How grand and blasé," she wrote, "the people all looked to these weary country girls, who had never seen anything more worldly than their domestic mothers! There was Mrs. Myra Clarke Gaines, then not more than ankle-deep in her great suit.[1] The beautiful Mrs. Ashleigh, afterward Mrs. John J. Crittenden; Appollonia Jagello, a Polish heroine, with a heavy mustache and a voice to match; Mrs. James Gordon Bennett; Mr. Calhoun and his family, just leaving for the house in which they were to live on Missouri Avenue; Mr. McDuffie, of South Carolina, formed in the same physical mould with Mr. Calhoun, but bearing aloft a Cavalier's head, and who, like Launcelot, though a doughty and most valiant knight, was 'not averse to dalliance for a while' with the pleasures of society; Judge Douglas,[2] the impersonation of the talent and force that 'westward took its way.' Judge Woodbury of the Supreme Court, a profound thinker, a faithful friend, and tender father and husband, whose brilliant eyes and gentle manners charmed me from the first, was there with his beautiful daughter, afterward Mrs. Montgomery Blair. She was the impersonation of a feminine Die Vernon—strong, tender, and beautiful in body and mind. Mrs. Woodbury was a singularly well-preserved, handsome, and elegant woman, and a most amiable and charitable creature. To this day I remember with a thrill of pleasure her remonstrance with Mrs. Blair and myself for laughing over a note she had received from an Associate

[1] A famous law suit in the city of New Orleans over land.
[2] Stephen A. Douglas.

Justice's wife, who had met Webster's Spelling-book too late in life. This lady declined an invitation, and plead a severe cold as her excuse in this wise: 'I have consulted a doctur and must endure my disappintment, it is nobel to bare but harde to suphur.' Mrs. Woodbury looked at us gravely and remarked, 'Do you not think that, with such difficulty about spelling, it was kind in her to try it?'

"Mr. Bedisco was the Russian Minister at that time, and his child-wife, lately a school girl from the District, was the admiration of all men, and for that matter women too. Her husband's looks were a powerful foil to hers, but he was most agreeable and kind.

"It is strange in the present memory of the past events to think how people were assembled there that winter who more or less entered our after-lives and were important factors therein. Mr. Seddon was there with his handsome bride. Colonel, afterward General Dix, was then a Senator from New York, and was one of the distinguished few who, kept house.

"Mr. Lincoln, I had heard, was a member of Congress that session. Mr. Slidell passed through Washington *en route* from Mexico, where he had been on some diplomatic mission, and we called to see him. When Mrs. Slidell entered the room her beauty, which was of the best 'creole type,' impressed us most agreeably. Mr. Slidell was also a man to be noticed anywhere. He had an air of quiet refinement that was very attractive, and his features were regularly handsome; but he looked, and indeed was, so much older than his wife that the contrast was sharp. Her features were regular, her figure noble, and she looked so dignified, and was so fair and courteous with her French *empressement* of manner that the impression she made on me

then was never effaced, and years after ripened into a sincere friendship that was never interrupted.

"Mr. Buchanan, who was then Secretary of State, came to the hotel one evening, and made a strong impression on me. He was very tall and of fine presence, and always wore a wide and spotless white cravat, faultlessly tied. His complexion was very fair and delicate, and his eyes were blue; but one of them had sustained some injury that had obscured the sight. The first thought that one had in looking at him was, how very clean he was. The only drawback to his appearance was a nervous jerking of his head at intervals, but it was not so often as to render him at all absurd. His unwilling footsteps were then just upon the boundary of middle age, and a more charming man could hardly be imagined. He was particularly gifted in polite repartee, and quick as a flash in response. In those days he liked society, and to be *bon camarade* to thoroughly refined women. At an evening entertainment Miss B—— very much desired a little dove that was nestled in a wreath of ivy, but had not uttered the wish. The master of the house—an aspirant for office, and not over fond of Mr. Buchanan—seeing her admiration of it said, 'I wish I were tall enough to reach that dove, Miss B——' you always put me in mind of one and I would give it to you.' Mr. Buchanan reached up several times to get it, and the host remarked, 'Take care, even you may reach too far.' Mr. Buchanan turned a searching look upon him, and, making another effort, secured the toy and remarked, 'Fearless minds climb soonest unto crowns, you know.' He had a reticent temper, but masked it under a diplomatic frankness of speech that was very engaging.

"Montgomery Blair, then a slender young widower, used to come very often to see Judge Woodbury's fair daughter;

he was tall and not personally graceful, and had what English people call a thoroughly American type of face, but he was only ten minutes behind the handsomest man present, for his smile was genial and he listened and responded with intelligent sympathy, and was faithful and sincere as he was tender and sympathetic."

It is apparent from the foregoing that Varina was getting her bearings, and was not half as afraid of the great world as she had thought to be. That Jefferson Davis was being recognized as one of the leaders of the younger men in the House of Representatives, was familiar with the city and felt at ease in the presence of elderly members of a long tenure in office were highly gratifying to the young wife who set store enough by such things. He recalled for her pleasure again a former visit to the city on his return from Havana to spend some time with his young friend, Franklin Pierce, and gave her a more extended account of it which she was careful to preserve in her memoirs. Among other attractions he told her Mr. Pierce had carried him for an "introduction to President Van Buren" on which occasion he received very pleasant impressions of the head of the nation. "Mr. Van Buren," he said, "came into them *soigne, astute*, and apparently confiding as a boy; but when one tried to remember his confidences they were either utterances about persons who had become, he felt sure, irreconcilable with him, or were on terms of declared and open hostility."

In a charming descriptton of the White House as her husband described it to her on the occasion of his visit she says, "Then the famous tabourets, called by the Congressional critic tabby cats, were gay with their glazed white chintz and pink roses. The adornments of the Executive Mansion were very simple; but the President's refined taste

had had interspersed old-fashioned bowls and vases of roses throughout the drawing-rooms. After a half hour's interview the President invited the young caller to breakfast; he was very attentive and talked to him of the army, of general politics and many more subjects which derived interest from Mr. Van Buren's rich stores of memory and graceful deference of manner." In the midst of a serious conversation after breakfast Varina records that the President's eye caught the visitor's handsome arched feet at their best in a pair of New Orleans shoes, and said, "Where did you get your shoes, may I ask? I had a pair like that made in France, but have never seen that stitch since." The young Southerner, it is said with much local pride told him that he had the shoes made in New Orleans. Certainly it can be believed that he was pleased with the President's notice of them, though ordinarily not as anxious in the matter of dress as his host, of whom Varina further wrote after the opportunity in later years was hers of studying him herself, that "attention to details—personal and governmental—wise reticence and perfect breeding was probably the source of much of Mr. Van Buren's success."[1]

[1] *A Memoir,* Vol. I.

CHAPTER XVIII

A CONGRESSMAN'S WIFE

HOLDING fast to her Southern ideas, teachings and training which had affected her deeply, her pride of locality being very pronounced, Varina had now entered Washington's political and, to a limited extent, social life. It was but natural that she should turn to the customs and standards of her own section for guidance. The theory of transmitted peculiarities of manner, gesture and voice, even of temperament and bent, from generation to generation is not an unlikely one but it is to environment and teachings that one turns for trend of thought and action. She was of "the South Southy," one soon discovered, and full ready to assert it on any occasion. Her nursery stories through the Kempes and Grahams had been of Virginia as were generally those of the children of the pioneers from that state, but she soon became conscious of her own environment and loved with ardor and passion the beautiful Gulf coast region, especially was she attached to the Mississippi country lying in and around Natchez and Vicksburg, the river being a special object of pride and admiration. But Varina was little more than a child when she left these local associations for an almost permanent life in the National Capital and one must, in taking stock of her varied advantages, take that in consideration in any biography of her.

In the circles in which she was thrown in Washington during her husband's first term in Congress, she became very

popular. The average woman sometimes thought her a bit too independent and even self-centered, but, as a shrewd student of feminine nature has observed, it is the average woman who of all others resents any form of superiority in her sex. As it was, Varina was constantly sought; many were charmed with her vivacious temperament, unusual mentality and culture while some were piqued with what they termed her "superior airs and manners." Having a keen sense for whatever was ridiculous in manner or speech and gifted in a degree with real humor she saw and heard much that diverted her, sometimes being unable to suppress her merriment at the predicament in which others at times got themselves, especially those who for no especial reason took themselves seriously. On one occasion she laughed a little too immoderately, her husband thought, at a very pompous male boarder who let a glass of buttermilk fall while in the act of drinking, wasting the fluid over his entire bosom, shirt front and lapels. "I could not help it," she confessed. "Had it been a little country Johnny I would have helped him out in every way possible, but think of such a lofty tower of vanity toppled over by a glass of buttermilk."[1]

Though now conscious enough of self, Varina was wholly immersed in her husband's affairs and eager for his public success. Of this period she wrote, "Now began Mr. Davis' earnest work. He visited very little, studied until two or three o'clock in the morning and with my assistance did all his writing. Between us we franked all the documents sent to his constituents, and all the letters. He was a 'working member,' but I think believed it his destiny to attain distinction at some future day." She continues in her *Memoir* of him, still after many years under the influence of his singularly charm-

[1] Conversations with descendants of contemporaries.

ing personality, to speak of his "fine bearing" and "natural dignity." The gay life about her, though not lost sight of, did not claim her attention ever to the extent of taking her from his side. There was her place, as it had been that of her mother's in the instance of her father, and farther back with the women of her family for many generations; she was thoroughly grounded in family ideals and traditions. It must have been to some extent intellectual satiety to have had the preparation of the speeches, addresses, research, correspondence and committee work going on night and day, but loving to be in his company more than all else, and growing more interested in public affairs, she was intensely happy often excusing herself from some little amusement planned by her niece, Miss Bradford, and others to be with her husband at some special crisis of a speech or an address, or to assist him in some laborious research. They worked congenially together, a joy that would be theirs when nearly every other joy had been denied them. She soon discovered his unusual ability for hard mental labor and in it she felt lay success, as "Great Heart" had told her many times. At a very early age and with a more than ordinary psychological insight she saw that his aspiration would not be satisfied with anything less than distinction. Her desire, too, for his success was keen. For herself—being always capable of securing easily the small triumphs women value, she grasped more lightly than most of her sex at social distinction, being at this time more absorbed in what she believed to be the real aim of marriage—that is, in making, in homely phrasing, "a good wife." Her mother had expected this of her, and without saying as much so had her father and tutor, and it was easy to act out life from the standpoint that had been created by these three strong influences.

In her new surroundings her health began to improve and members of the "Congressional Mess" in the boarding house on the Avenue which had been secured after about ten days of splendid living at the National began remarking that she was a very handsome young woman. "Both agreeable and charming" some said, who were especially impressed and drawn to her. "A little too obscessed with the thought of her husband's superiority and her own self-importance" others more tartly declared.[1]

Life in the boarding house on Pennsylvania Avenue was far more quiet than it had been at the fashionable hotel filled with brilliant people, still it had its contact more or less and in varying degree with the entire political circle that formed the government made up of circles within circles. There was sufficient excitement and social diversion for both country and small town representative, and especially in the life and affairs of the small coterie of public officials who with their families clubbed together in what they called their "Mess." These circles were very popular at that period and, with the understanding that no one the majority objected to should become a member, these protected themselves to a great extent from indiscriminate association. The Davis "Congressional Mess" was hedged about with an exclusiveness characteristic of the Southern gentry—exclusiveness that did not stress a man's coat—as much as the style and quality of the garment was preferred, with the same emphasis that it did the question as to whether or not *he was a gentleman.* If any were not what the Southerner termed a *gentleman* or as the case of an applicant might be, a *lady*—a peculiarity and differentiation no amount

[1] Contemporaries claim that this was not noticeable in Mrs. Davis' manner in any objectionable degree.

of fine feathers availed anything if it could not be established, neither he nor she could secure admittance into the inner circle that made up the club. Callers on political business were never taken in unless these measured up to the standard and had themselves properly introduced. It made not so much difference what State they represented if they were congenial in taste and aspirations and held in threadbare phrasing "the same ideals." To any marked extent, social bitterness and antagonisms did not exist at this period of history between the various sections of the Union and any manifestations of these were generally of an individual nature. That the husbands and wives of the Mississippi delegation in the lower House were for the most part congenial we gather from Varina's *Memoir* of her husband. In our "Mess" she says, "were the two members from Mississippi and their pleasant kindly wives, Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Thompson and Mr. and Mrs. Stephen Adams. Among others she mentions Daniel S. Dickenson of New York, Mr. Foster of Pennsylvania, General Jones of Iowa[1] and several who came from neighboring boarding houses to have what they called 'little confabs.' "

It was in this circle that Varina began developing, though in a limited way for the present, an intellectualism, wit and repartee that distinguished her through life.[2] Her husband who was one of the most intellectual and attractive members of the lower House of Congress drew about him from the first the stronger more polished minds of that body, and Varina had the benefit of conversations and discussions touching every important phase of public life. She was

[1] These names are mentioned, and others of that day will also be, for the sake of historical interest.

[2] *A Diary from Dixie* by Mary Boykin Chestnut.

generally present at such time and Jefferson Davis liked for her to be there. It recalled the pleasure he felt when she not much more than a child had before their marriage read to Mr. Joseph Davis and himself at "The Hurricane." It was soon observed by others what a good listener she could be on such occasions, a habit or, perhaps, a discretion of Varina's that gave rise to much favorable comment among her husband's friends, since men she quickly discovered, wearied alike of the chattering and the dumb woman. That she was a good conversationalist as well as a good listener they also discovered and she often found herself taking part in their discussion of public matters. People intellectually inclined liked her, enjoyed her good humor and appreciated her fine comprehension of any topic of discussion.[1] She had also little difficulty in making people of the plainer class like her. There were, others, however, who continually harped on her "superior airs and manners" to continue it through life. That she herself did not like certain people may be seen in her classification of them in some such words as, "bores and scourges of society who live to controvert."[2] This however was directed more against the type than the individual. It could not be said as a truth of her that it was her desire to outclass any one —shine herself as she was inclined to do; but, on discovering a spirit of jealousy or envy in another, a spirit that she with a little outburst of mirth told her friends "Great Heart" had warned her against as belittling to character, especially to "female character," she was ready enough to teach such a one a lesson, sometimes a severer one than she had intended. Even at this early age the woman who had wantonly

[1] Conversations with Mrs. H. B. Kells.
[2] *A Memoir,* Vol I.

displayed this spirit toward her dreaded the little scornful laugh that reached her ear across the room, derision which she felt was intended for herself. At such times the offender did not like to encounter the look in the dark eyes, bent upon her in a steady, level gaze.

Some people said that Varina's eyes were the best feature she had, but taken all together she had at that time what one would call a beautiful, rather proud face, glowing as it now was with the first softness and freshness of youth. When youth was gone biographers no longer used the term "beauty," but described it as a "smooth comely face." The soft, liquid, half-sad eyes, however, were to remain beautiful throughout life.[1] Socially, as the more ultra claimed, she was handicapped to some extent. Her teaching had been full of straight-laced ideals of a day when women rarely went wrong. To these her faithful tutor had unconsciously contributed a fair share of Puritanic concept which, though transplanted, would unexpectedly at times bear fruit in abundance. Though not given to the prudery and false modesty that prevailed to an excessive degree in some sections of the country, she was nevertheless strict in her standard of social conduct for both men and women as her *Memoir* reveals. She could not at this period if she ever came to do so, bear with the meanness and pettiness that sometimes crept into social intercourse, and when not always able to meet it with a sally of humorous contempt, her indignation and irritation at times were so apparent as to be taken for unrestraint. From her husband, however, to whom she confided such experiences she daily took lessons in self-control and patience. That she was happy and care free at this period of life is seen from old let-

[1] Conversations with descendants of contemporary families.

ters found among her files in after years. Of a day of diversion she wrote, "We went down today to see Mr. Morse's machine make the wires talk and repeat messages from one town to another. There are small wires stretched from Baltimore to this place, and they are brought into the windows of a house on the Avenue. Inside of a little stall a man sits and sends messages and receives the answer. I think it is a trick but paid my two-bits (twenty-five cents) to get a message that it was a fine day."[1]

[1] "Two-bits," also "four-bits" and "six-bits," were Southern if not American colloquialisms, of that day and are still heard in far rural places in the South.

CHAPTER XIX

EARLY INCIDENTS OF WASHINGTON LIFE

VARINA was daily developing the individuality and mental power that distinguished her in later years and to a great extent set her apart from other women. Treasure the seed the Pilot's wife had given her for the Brierfield orchards as she may she was at present absorbed in and keenly alive to the life around her especially in that which concerned her husband, every phase of which was freely discussed in the privacy of their rooms. In association with the brilliant minds about her the literature, history, studies, and discussions on art—in fact all that had been stored in her mind under the judicious guidance of her faithful tutor and had lain dormant was now becoming of use to her. Her conversation was witty and sparkling. There was a crudeness it is true at this age, but with riper years her powers were brilliant and there was always a touch of the humorous. In the numerous memoirs and histories that have given us glimpses of her no reminiscences of any extent at this particular period of her life have been recorded; recollections, however, of local contemporaries have given the impression that even at the early age of twenty she was one who would attract instant attention in any crowd. Her contemporaries throughout the Natchez District counties, and many of these were as cultured as any in the Republic, have left impressions of her with their descendants,—the words "winning," "beauty," "charm," "gracious," and "kind"—be-

ing the ones more frequently used in describing her.[1] Her husband's first session in Congress afforded her numerous social opportunities in the matter of large public receptions to which all were invited. In Congressional halls, too, important legislation always brought out the female contingent in force. All was of much advantage to the young country-bred woman who, however scrupulously she had been reared and educated, felt the need of contact with the great outside world. It was somewhat slowly and often with reluctance and even stubbornness that she yielded any superiority of her section. "They smile" she told her husband on one occasion with a hot flush "whenever I speak of Southern Colleges, and they take themselves so seriously that it is positively comical."[2]

This small outburst delivered half in irritation, half in humor, told the state of mind in which Varina sometimes found herself. But she was handsome, lighthearted, kindly disposed and popular and soon got over any small hurts she may have experienced in her first contact with a more general society than she had hitherto known. She was intensely interested in Congressional affairs especially those which interested her husband. That no least act of his was lost upon her nor failed of intelligent comprehension is seen from the fact that she remembered and recorded in her *Memoir* of him every small incident of his public service. "On the 29th of December," she says, "after taking his seat in Congress he offered two resolutions, one on military affairs in which he was interested and the other in connection with the establishment of a mail route from Montgomery,

[1] Conversations with Mrs. Harriet B. Kells.

[2] Many such stories were preserved by descendants of contemporary Natchez families.

Alabama to Jackson, Mississippi." Everything he did interested her and the fact that he was thoroughly preparing himself for more extended influence in legislation was not lost upon her. Her tutor had early impressed upon her mind the value of application. That he would be familiar with all matters that might come up for discussion she did not doubt as she watched him studying questions far into the night.

For one so young her powers of observation were large and penetrating, and her observations stayed with her. With perfect ease she recalled in after life the men and women with whom she was associated during the earliest years of her husband's public service and in all the colorful picture one sees that she set him high above everything else about her. She often confessed to her friends at home that the very thought that she was "Jefferson Davis' wife" made her a "proud young creature." Her biographer has no desire to hide the fact from posterity that she was, at this period especially, somewhat vain and egotistical. She was human with many of its weaknesses and frailities but she was generous, loyal and affectionate. The pride that a young woman naturally takes in the man she loves was in her case very pronounced and continued so through life, but her standards were those of her beloved "Great Heart." She would have every honor bestowed upon her lover, but she would have none conferred upon him that were not worthily sought and won. What we now call "high ideals" were the very warp and woof of her being. Her tutor had not performed his mission lightly. The ardor too of religious emotion so pronounced at that day was strong throughout life, to comfort her when there was so much else to discomfort her. But hers was innate and natural spirituality that of itself gen-

erates happiness independent of dogma and tenet. She was never gloomy nor morbid in intercourse with kindred and friends. She had confidence in her self, and to a large extent it must be admitted, but she deferred to her husband in most things, and to the last verge of life's tragic drama reached out to him for council and approval.

Varina made much of her opportunity at the Nation's Capital. She soon understood to an extent every political movement of both parties in the House of Representatives and in the Senate. Her *Memoir* clearly indicates memory work of a high order. Her pleasure in none of her husband's triumphs of this first session was greater than that she experienced in his defense of Daniel Webster against whom charges had been brought involving improper expenditures. The great man's growing interest in her husband had been noted by her and the subsequent expression of the latter's faith in the New England statesman made her very happy. And who but the most malignant and censorious could be critical of her pleasure in the fact that both Mr. and Mrs. Webster sincerely admired both and extended them numerous social courtesies. Varina had always enjoyed the best social circles at home, and, while she liked to meet all kinds of people, enjoyed them and was adaptable, she craved the society of the truly intellectual and well-bred.

Of her husband's vindication of Webster she writes in her *Memoir* in graphic sentences:

"The hands of the public men of the time had been clean of plunder, or the imputation of dishonesty—it was not a day of personal 'investigations.' Wall Street had no subterranean passage leading to the White House; and an im-

putation upon the honor of a senator startled his colleagues like 'a fire-bell in the night.'

"Mr. [Charles J.] Ingersoll" she continues, "astonished the House and Senate by moving an inquiry into Mr. Webster's conduct as Secretary of State. He asked for the papers relating to the killing of Dupree, an American. In 1837, a party of Americans had made an effort to capture and occupy Navy Island, a British possession, and Dupree had been one of them. The attempt was not successful, the invading party were captured, and Dupree killed in the *melee*. In 1840, two years after, McLeod, the man who killed him, related the circumstance in a boastful manner in New York. He was arrested and tried for murder. Mr. Fox, for the English Government, avowed the act and demanded McLeod's release. Mr. Ingersoll accused Mr. Webster of using the contingent fund and his personal influence over Mr. W. H. Seward, Governor of New York, to secure McLeod's release; of expending public moneys in corrupting the press and the people and of being himself a defaulter to the Government. He compared the illustrious ex-Secretary of State to Bacon, 'the wisest and meanest of mankind,' capping the indictment with the suggestion that Mr. Webster had offered the Northwest Territory to Great Britain in exchange for free trade. Astonishing as it now seems, the resolution calling upon the President for the correspondence covering this period was passed—136 yeas to 28 nays—though Mr. Adams assured the House, as an ex-President of the United States, that Mr. Webster had no opportunity to defraud the Government of the secret-service money or contingent fund, without the co-operation of the President, and gave the most cogent reasons why these secret negotiations should not be made public. It would be a most embarrassing precedent, and one

it would be unadvisable to establish and impracticable to follow. Mr. Winthrop, of Massachusetts, Mr. Seddon, of Virginia, and most of the conservative men of the House objected to calling for the secret papers as a dangerous precedent; but Mr. Winthrop said if any were called for, he wanted also those concerning Texas and Louisiana. T. Butler King and other men of national reputation spoke warmly against the resolutions."

"The effort to stain the great reputation of Mr. Webster, in the possession of which the North and South felt alike honored, the petty sum that he was accused of flinching ($5,460), horrified his friends and staggered the faith of his enemies in his accuser. Everybody was enlisted on one side or the other. The prevailing impression made upon the moderate men of both parties was that Mr. Ingersoll's spleen was the result of some private pique. Mr. Webster made rather a lengthy explanation to the Senate, before such a crowd of spectators in the galleries and on the floor of the Senate, that even outside the railing there was not standing room. His manner was not that of a man defending himself before enemies, but rather of a brother explaining to his family one of his contentions with the outer world, and confiding his unexpected annoyance to those of whose sympathy he was assured. I venture to say he received it very generally. The ladies and the reporters certainly were with him. After various pros and cons, stated by almost all the leading men of the House, following pretty much the bent of party rancor, the resolutions were passed. The resolution called up T. Butler King, of Georgia, in defense of Mr. Webster; Mr. Ingersoll in reiteration and reaffirmation; Mr. Ashman, of Massachusetts, in defense. Mr. Schenck and Mr. John Pettit (Democrat) each moved that a committee be organ-

ized, the first to inquire how the seal of confidence imposed upon the Department had been broken; the second to examine into the charges, with a view to impeaching Mr. Webster. This last committee, of course, had the power conferred to 'send for persons and papers.' Under this permission ex-President Tyler had been summoned to Washington. On the committee, as finally organized, were Mr. Vinton, of Ohio; Jefferson Davis, of Mississippi; D. P. King, of New York, and Jacob Brinkerhoff, of Ohio. It was before them that ex-President Tyler appeared and exonerated Mr. Webster.

"There were two reports written: one vindicatory of Mr. Webster, but deprecatory of further inquiry, and a minority report, which was written by Mr. Davis, and was not the one at first designed to be presented, but which finally, after many emendations, was accepted by the committee.

"As Mr. Webster was looked upon at the time as the prominent candidate for the Presidency, there were some unpleasant remarks about a Democrat 'whitewashing' him; and a Northern tariff Democrat came to Mr. Davis, at our lodging, the night before the result of the committee's deliberations was announced, to argue against the opportunity being lost of 'scotching the snake.' Mr. Davis told him with much heat that if Mr. Webster was to be entailed upon the country for life, 'and no one could deprecate his policy more than I do, I would not make a false and partisan report or parley with my sense of justice and honor, nor would the gentlemen associated with me.' "

After recording this incident she was particular to add, feeling still after many years pleasure in the mutual friendship, "Mr. Webster called upon Mr. Davis and expressed in warm terms his appreciation of the manly manner in which

he had defended him. Mr. and Mrs. Webster came to call upon me, and invited me most kindly to accompany them to Marshfield." If she was pleased with this attention from these staid fixtures of national social life let those who are free of all such vanities condemn.

CHAPTER XX

DAY AT THE NATIONAL EXHIBITION

VARINA'S nature was no permanent pool upon whose glazed surface one grows tired of gazing, jetties, ripples and even swift and fierce currents at times stirred its deep waters; still, no neurotic twinges grappled with her firm, nervous organism and all her emotions were pleasant sensations, calling for laughter, bright scenes, agreeable people.

As deeply interested as she had become in the public affairs that concerned her husband's career there were hours in which her nature demanded lighter diversion, wholesome recreation to which she had been accustomed, and to which her youth turned instinctively and responsively. In some it is merely sensuous satisfaction, in her it was the happy mixture where the powers of the spirit, mind and body blended in equal proportion. Her nature was her contemporaries claimed "a well-balanced one. She could both work and play."

Though they took few outings, she says *it was on account of Congressional duties.* This early she was learning to discipline her self. The National Exposition, however, aroused her holiday spirit. She had been accustomed to gala days in the South and outdoor amusement appealed to her. Expositions of a various nature had been of common occurrence in Natchez and New Orleans and in some respects were better ordered. This was to be on a larger scale and held some newer phases since the entire country was to some extent represented. "It was then called," she says, "a Na-

tional Exhibition. The building was a very long, clapboard room, with no pretention to any architectural merit. It occupied nearly two squares on C Street, and was perfectly straight except in the open square of the City Hall, where it extended an ugly arm about twenty feet. The stands for the exhibit were of unplaned wood, and these were covered with coarse, dark cambric. Almost every State sent earnest of its industry and ingenuity. Very wonderful they were to us then; but bungling efforts enough now, viewed by the light of modern discoveries."

It is certain that Varina compared every detail of the National exhibits with the home display. The people of the South at that period were given to much pride in their section, and the Southern Mississippi Valley population was accumulating more wealth than any other section of the country. In the Natchez district not only the best house furnishings but many things that Paris and the older States had to furnish were found in abundance. One can easily imagine the young Varina fresh from the Mississippi River country chattering to her husband as they walked from exhibit to exhibit, "We had this better at Natchez," or "Mississippi has a finer grade of this," or when in the live stock department exclaim that a certain cow at "Brierfield" was just as fine as "the one in that stall," all of which would have been natural and in keeping with her present age. But Varina was also keenly interested in the display as a whole and understood its vast importance to the country, in her enthusiasm pronouncing it all "wonderful." Her holiday was further enlivened by several amusing incidents, occurrences that usually accompany expositions, fairs and other outdoor gatherings. The first exhibition of the sewing machine—"sewing jenny" she tells us it was called at that time was an event out

of which she extracted much amusement especially from the quaint remarks of the bystanders, describing the incident in after years in a picture that few novelists could surpass. The tart wit of the uneducated classes always held for her—and she says for her husband also, a rich source of pleasure. That he relaxed on such occasions was evident since she leaves us to believe that every incident of the exposition appealed to both.

"The crowd," she says, "was constant about a certain stand, and my husband made a place for me to see the wonderous thing on it. It was a small box, and through a slot on the top was slowly pushed two narrow edges of cloth, and a needle with an eccentric motion played laterally through the cloth and sewed a pretty good seam. An old woman with bare knotty hands, a much pricked forefinger, and a large basket of cloth on her arm, pointed to the little box and said, with a snarl, 'That's all nice, but sposen it ware breeches' (tapping her basket significantly), 'that there box wouldn't begin to hold 'em.' Mr. Davis always appreciated with boyish zest any humorous thing, and he laughed aloud. This daunted the exhibitor somewhat, but he shot a look of contempt at the practical old operative and plunged into a state of unintelligible terminology in which slots, tentions, headpieces, spirals, cylinders, cogs, and what not made havoc with his audience. We fled; the old seamstress followed."

The great throng through which they moved with no small air of distinction, the thick bevies of plain people with their wholesome sense of enjoyment, quaint dress and frank expressions of wonder at the things they saw, were all enjoyed with a keen relish by both husband and wife; more so it is certain by the wife. Her lighter and for that reason more buoyant temperament would always prove a refreshing and

grateful stimulant to the husband whose detached, more abstract mind busied itself with the study and contemplation of deep causes, and the right and wrong of every question these involved.

Among the distinguished personages they met at the Exposition, and Varina's keen perceptions enabled her to instantly recognize the mark of distinction in either men or women, was ex-President Tyler. Of the meeting she wrote in vivid description in after years:

"A few steps beyond us, coming also to view the 'sewing Jenny,' as it was most often called, strolled a tall thin gentleman, with a large hooked nose, steady grey eyes, iron grey hair, and a dignified, majestic presence, united to a certain benevolent, bland toleration of manner, like a general in mufti among his troops. He approached us. When just about to pass, one of the loose planks in the flooring tilted under his feet, and as he was going to fall Mr. Davis caught him. He recovered himself with easy grace and having offered thanks he turned to leave. I whispered, 'I am sure he is somebody,' which induced Mr. Davis to observe the stranger more narrowly. Immediately he made a low bow and saluted ex-President Tyler, who was strolling through the Exposition for the first time. . . . Mr. Tyler remembered Mr. Davis also, and was gracious enough to speak of the impression he had received when Mr. Davis was presented to him in 1836. Mr. Tyler accepted my husband's arm, and we walked slowly on, and then those two interesting gentlemen thoroughly succeeded in shuffling off the mortal coil of the childish young person who trotted beside them, ardently longing for a look at all the new and curious wares displayed; but perforce of the dignity and simplicity of their conversation was somewhat consoled for the personal sacri-

fice. However, our few outings generally ended in the same way.

"After a cursory view of the political horizon," she continues, "they plunged into a long conversation upon the recent inquiry into Mr. Webster's administration of the 'secret service money.' Mr. Tyler said he had been summoned to testify before the committee of investigation; that he thought it a great outrage upon a man in whose genius the people of the whole Union gloried; and that Mr. Webster had satisfied him, at the time, of its careful and wise use. Mr. Davis asked him if he had preserved notes of these secret transactions, and taking the affirmative for granted, went on to say: 'I suppose you, Mr. President, can spread these now before us, as they are past history and Mr. Webster's best vindication.' But Mr. Tyler gravely responded that 'he had never considered himself authorized to put on any private file the matters that the Government had decided should not appear on those of the country. I can give, if interrogated, dates, sums, and persons to whom the money was paid. The very nature of the service shows that it is Punic faith to those who give the information to expose their agency in the matter by making written record of it.' Mr. Davis then politely pressed the stately old man to tell how he could remember: 'Is it by a system of mnemonics?' I mentally registered a vow to find out what mnemonics was, and be even with them. Mr. Tyler replied, and I think I remember the words of his answer: 'No, sir, I remembered them as part of my duty to the State. As no written record was permitted, the Government took it for granted I would not forget.' They then strolled on, talking on public matters, and of the arts of agriculture, in which they were both proficient. A fine Hereford cow had been sent for exhibition from the

ex-President's plantation, Sherwood Forest, on the James River, and he took us to the awkward arm of the building, in which were a few stalls, and showed us the cow. A man came and milked her, and Mr. Tyler, Mr. Davis, and I took a tin cup of unpleasantly warm but rich milk, and went out into the Capitol grounds, where they sat down on one of the benches and 'talked above' me. In about an hour Mr. Tyler turned and said to me, in a wonderfully winning tone, 'Have I spoiled your morning, Madam, with my dull talk?' My husband, partly conscious that he had, and fearful lest I might not be able to cope with the emergency, answered quickly: 'Oh, no, my little wife is trying to be a statesman.' They both laughed, and the President then said he was going to make a call upon James Seddon, a young member of Congress from Virginia, a promising young man if his health proved equal to severe labor, and then spoke of Mrs. Seddon as a handsome creature, 'who was, you know, Sarah Bruce.' We did not know, but cheerfully said we would call upon them at another time at his request, and he bade us a cordial good-morning. I never saw him again until he came on the arm of his beautiful wife to visit us in the Mansion, at Richmond, sixteen years afterward, and two years before my sister became his grand-daughter-in-law.

"When I reached home I straightway wrote to my father, 'Who do you think drank out of the same tin cup with me today? Why, ex-President Tyler, and he is not the man the National Intelligencer made him out at all. He is not handsome, but he looks a very fine gentleman, and I am sure was not afraid to meet the question of the tariff."

"When these august shades," she continues in mellow mood, "rise before me whose active lives had been lived before I grew to womanhood, the responsible, serious youth

that fell to my lot is not a subject of regret. The history of their day has to me a very stirring interest, and as I now read the chronicles of their deeds, they stand before me clothed in their well-remembered personality."

Another incident of her husband's first session in Congress in which she gives with characteristic insight and facilness her impressions of John Quincy Adams is quoted from her memoirs as it bears on future circumstances of her life.

"On May 29th a skirmish opened between two men, for each of whom the future had in store the highest political responsibilities and honors. These men came from the same section. They coincided on the leading war issues; but their early associations and education had made them totally unlike in their powers and personal character. One was Mr. Jefferson Davis, the other was Mr. Andrew Johnson.

"Mr. Davis, in supporting the resolution, had protested against the unjust criticisms of the army and the West Point Academy, which had been expressed a few days previously by a member from Ohio. He hoped that gentleman (Mr. Sawyer) would now learn the value of military science, and that he would see in the location, construction, and the defence of the bastioned field-work opposite Matamoras 'the utility, the necessity of a military education.' Following, and tracing with a soldier's eye the whole of those admirable movements, guided by skill and knowledge, which had crumbled the stone walls of Matamoras to the ground, he asked him to say 'whether he believed a blacksmith or a tailor could have secured the same results?' Mr. Davis mentioned these two trades at random not knowing that either tailor or blacksmith was present. Mr. Sawyer, while avowing himself a blacksmith, was good-natured enough in his retort. This controversy was renewed the next day by

Andrew Johnson. Vaunting himself upon being a mechanic, with a slur upon an 'illegitimate, swaggering, bastard, scrub aristocracy,' he declared that 'when a blow was struck upon that class, either direct or by innuendo, from Whig or Democrat, he would resent it.' He summoned all history, sacred and profane, beginning with Adam, who (he said) was a tailor, to do honor to his class of mechanics.

"Mr. Davis had named two of the trades of civil life, he said, but in doing so he had no desire to attack any particular class. His opinion was simply that war, like other knowledge, must be acquired. Nothing was more manifest throughout this debate than the courtesy of one party to it, unless it was the demagogism of the other. From this debate arose all Mr. Johnson's subsequent animosity against Mr. Davis.

"When Mr. Davis sprung up all aglow with indignation, and with as much fervor as eloquence, paid this tribute to his Alma Mater, and put a lance in rest for her, Joshua Giddings raised his gaunt form, put his hand behind his ear and listened. Ex-President John Quincy Adams crossed over from the other side of the chamber and took a seat near enough to hear. Mr. Adams was a rather thick-set, short man, with irregular features; he had small, but bright, intense eyes; his head was large and entirely destitute of hair, and when excited it became a glowing red; his eyebrows assumed a pointed arch, and his mobile, rather large mouth, could wreathe itself into the impersonation of lofty disdain. His whole person and movements bore the stamp of good-breeding; there was a repose, a deliberate examination of the person addressing him which put the unfortunate on trial where he must, in dumb submission, be judged on his merits. When Mr. Adams listened to my husband I was a proud

young creature, and knew he must be doing something well; but found, afterward, that, to every new member he listened atentively once, and never again, unless pleased. Mr. Adams, when the debate was over, arose and said to one of the other members, 'We shall hear more of that young man, I fancy.' "

CHAPTER XXI

FACES OUT OF THE PAST

Of public men and of women with whom she was associated during her husband's first sessions in Congress Mrs. Davis wrote so charmingly and discriminatingly that any portrait of her would suffer in withholding these warm touches of color scattered through the sober pages of her *Memoir*.[1] Life must have held a brimming cup to her lips during these years, and for one so young she drank of its content with far more moderation than most of her sex in the same situation would perhaps have done. Though passionately giving herself to the one aim and object of life—her husband's interests and happiness, and as some have rightly insisted not unmindful of her own, her *Memoir* clearly indicated that at an early age people and the world about her caught her attention and interested her intensely. Of the brilliant circle of that day in which she bore herself as merely the handsome, bright and very young wife of a handsome and distinguished young Congressman she gives us the following delightful reminiscences in which she also included her impressions of the Senate at one session of Congress. Of Charles Ingersoll, she records that "notwithstanding his ill-made wig, great age, and prejudice against Mr. Webster he was, nevertheless, a charming old man, and *au courant* with all the polite literature of the day. The most delightful evening of my early youth was spent at Mr. Robert J. Walker's when he was Secretary of the Treasury talking with Mr. Ingersoll

[1] These impressions include several sessions of Congress.

and Mr. George M. Dallas. No young men of this or any other day that I have seen, ever equalled them. These two splendid creatures, finding themselves in charge of a very inexperienced young person, commenced to angle in the shallow stream for such sport as the green recesses might afford? They talked to each other and to me of Byron and Wordsworth, of Dante and Virgil, and I remember the key they gave me to their tastes and temperamental divergence. Mr. Dallas said Wordsworth was the poet of nature, and Mr. Ingersoll remarked that he bore the same relation to cultivated poetic manhood that Adam did to Goethe, and 'who would hesitate for a moment which to choose if granted a day with either.' Mr. Dallas immediately announced a preference for Adam, and insisted that a mind fresh from the storehouse of the Supreme Source of all knowledge must have developed many godlike facts instead of immature theories, etc. They whetted their wits upon each other for some time until I ventured the remark that, whether by sin and sorrow, or observation of natural forces, I felt, as man progressed, he became more interesting, whereupon Mr. Ingersoll laughingly said, 'You see Mrs. Davis agrees with me that Cain was more aggressive, and therefore more attractive than Abel, and the ladies in the Land of Nod clearly were more agreeable than those of Eden.' After this evening Mr. Ingersoll was so good as to call several times, and I felt, in Yorkshire phrase, 'uploifted' by the attention."

Of the brilliant family of Baches she says that they were "well-educated, and thoroughly pleasant people." "They had little of poor Richard's thrift, but much of their grandfather's shrewd wit and wisdom. Mrs. Bache (nee Dallas) and her sister, Mrs. Campbell, of Philadelphia, were rare women of the stamp of Lady Palmerston. Age did not seem

to dull their sympathies nor impair their mental and moral qualities.

> 'They wore the marks of many years well spent,
> Of virtue, truth well tried, and wise experience,'

and their wit and charm of manner placed them at sixty years of age, or more, only a few minutes behind the prettiest girl in that very literary and delightful society. Mrs. Campbell had but one child, a distinguished lawyer in Philadelphia—St. George Campbell—but Mrs. Bache had many sons and daughters, who played more or less brilliant roles in governmental society. Dallas Bache, of the Coast Survey, in his day one of the greatest savans the country had produced; George Bache, a brilliant naval officer, who gallantly gave up his life to save the passengers on his sinking ship, and with a sad smile took off his cap and bowed to them as his ship went down before the overladen boats; Richard Bache, also an officer of the Navy, was drowned while making a survey of the coast."

Of a number of the wives of distinguished men of that period she wrote, "Mrs. Robert J. Walker, the wife of the Secretary of the Treasury and whilom Senator from Mississippi, Mrs. Irwin, wife of the former Minister to Sweden, Mrs. William H. Emory, whose husband was afterward a General in the United States Army—and who was herself a well-known wit, Mrs. Charles Abert, Mrs. Richard Wainright of the Navy, and Mrs. Allen McLane, a woman of marvelous wit, and strong, bright understanding were all, in their different manner, *belles esprits*; and their children, many of them, are inheritors of much of the family talent. Mrs. Walker's beautiful daughter, Mary, afterward became

Mrs. Brewster, the wife of the Attorney General of President Arthur's Administration."

With an interest and zest that amounted almost to a fascination in the instance of her sex she preserves the following story of Mrs. Dallas Bache whom she describes as a woman "with a great deal of character and much common-sense, and not a little epigrammatic wit." "Like Mrs. Gladstone, she had given up her life to her husband and was part of all his labors. Once he wrote to her from the Capitol to tell the clerks to send him, in great haste, some papers, needful for the defence of the Coast Survey. She inquired of them and found they knew nothing of what she wanted. She searched until she found them, and wrote only this commentary, 'Pins have heads.'

Describing the Coast Survey at that time she says that it "was a large, old-fashioned barrack of a house, on the edge of Capitol hill, overlooking Pennsylvania Avenue. It was very plainly furnished, and had no curtains to the drawing-room windows, but certain riotously healthy rose geraniums that grew in boxes were interlaced across the window panes and made a flickering green and gray light, and exhaled a delicate odor. This perfume now brings back a ray of the old joy that used to pervade us all when 'the family' were bidden to supper there. On these occasions Mr. Davis and Professor Bache, General Emory and Mr. Walker, jested like boys, told stories of their West Point life, or of canvasses for office in Mississippi. I had known Mr. Walker since my infancy, and his wife was my mother's dear and intimate friend before my birth, and sometimes we went into a regular romp with him, in which he joined with boyish zest."

That Varina enjoyed this first taste of social life in the

Capitol and that little escaped her maybe gathered from the following: "About nine o'clock we were ushered pell-mell into a long, unfurnished room, the walls of which were hung everywhere with scientific instruments; disused theodolites were shunted into dark corners; old telescopes, with all the paraphenalia of adjuncts to scientific investigation; and, in the middle of the room, was a great table laden with everything good and appetizing that Washington could furnish. Then the terrapins and canvas-back ducks were not, as now, going to join the buffaloes, the dodo, the roc, and the phoenix as extinct animals; so they were there in profusion. The perfume of the long-necked bottle of Rhine wine filled the room, which the Professor opened himself, there being no servants present, and the gentlemen pledged us and each other in a glass, and the quip and jest flew from one to another, and made of our suppers at the Coast Survey real *noctes ambrosianae.* When Professor Bache was domesticated with Humboldt, wither he went to investigate the school system of Germany, he learned to like these wines, and always imported them himself."

Her husband she says "was the life of the party, and I never heard him advert but once with regret to a night there. He was one Christmas persuaded to sing an Indian song, and Dallas Bache put on a fur coat to personate Santa Claus, and gave the presents in the most truly dreadful doggerel." Six months afterward, one warm summer day, her husband she continues, exclaimed that he felt oppressed, and said, "I think it is not the weather, it must be the memory of my Indian song last Christmas, and dear Dallas Bache's execrable doggerel. I am sorry I did not make him sing, and do the rhyme myself." As the Professor could not turn a tune, and he had no capacity for jocular rhyme, I thought

they had reached their utmost limits as it was, but refrained from venturing an opinion.

"With the memory of that time come reminiscences of Mr. Robert C. Winthrop and Mr. Bancroft—two men wholly different, yet both most interesting in their way. Mr. Winthrop's personnel bore up his elegance of manner bravely; his refinement was physical as well as mental and acquired. I never saw a woman who did not feel the implied compliment of his notice and a keen enjoyment of his society. His conversation was deliberate and unaffected, but most suggestive. It has been thirty years since I have seen him, but the memory of his friendly regard has always been cherished by me as a gift not to be voluntarily surrendered. Mr. Bancroft was an eccentric man, as typical of his section as Mr. Davis was of his, with a thousand graceful tastes, but a quaint, abrupt manner of seizing the salient points in the mind of his auditor, and turning them from side to side under his tourmalin until every shade of color shone distinctly. It made me feel brilliant to talk to him. Then he had the knack of looking interested in the most simple, dull persons, and gave his undivided attention to them for the time. He was liberalized by extensive and observant travel, and could bear the dullness of others, being so able to illuminate it by his own light. His wife was a charming woman, with the best, but the pronounced type of New England manners—reserved to a fault, but very sweet and approachable to the few she accepted as congenial to her taste.

"Governor Marcy was one of the lions of that time. His wife was a sterling woman, who had a great deal of social talent united to an unconventional honesty remarkable in a woman of the world. They were wealthy, and entertained with ease and profusion. He was not a genial

man; he was ambitious and too much in earnest to spare time for a social intercourse, but he held well in hand a great deal of caustic wit, and never, though rather testy, ill-naturedly gave it the reins without great provocation. An old diplomat once said that he never understood Mr. Marcy's prominence in politics until he made him angry, 'und den I say here is von lion who is dressed for every day like von lamb.'

"We saw but little socially of the President's family during Mr. Polk's administration. We then did not keep a carriage, and Mr. Davis's wound incapacitated him from walking any distance, as he was on crutches, and we therefore boarded near the Capitol for his convenience. People neither made nor wasted money in that day as they do now, and were not indifferent to the fact that a livery carriage meant $1.50 an hour; there were no tramways and no omnibus lines. The distance was so great between the two co-ordinant branches of government, the Executive and Legislative, that, taken in conjunction with the driver's alleged duty to make his horses creep, one could do a little making calls in the space of a day.

"My social memory of Mr. and Mrs. Polk meagre. He was not an impressive man at first, but his kind, even deferential, but reserved manner won upon the person honored with his attention. He impressed me as a man inately single-minded, of simple tastes, and unimpugnable honor. His health was evidently not strong, and the duties of his office seemed to wear greatly upon him. Mrs. Polk was very decorous and civil in her manner to all. My acquaintance with her was very slight."

The personnel of the House at that time, she wrote was "not so notable as that of the Senate; it was more noisy, less

distinguished, if one might so say, than when ex-President Adams was there and the two Ingersolls, besides many others who became notable afterward. Judge Stephen A. Douglas was just beginning to figure in the public eye as a leading man of pronounced opinions."

Of Vice-President George Mifflin Dallas a warm friend of her husband she wrote in terms of praise that he presided over the Senate with matchless grace and temper, and it was at that time an august body composed of men of great dignity, intellect, and integrity.

"Then Senators wore full dress on the floor of the Senate, or such ceremonious garments as marked their respect for the place. The older men wore silk stockings and low shoes. Mr. Dallas always wore a spotless white cravat. He was tall and well proportioned, his eye and eyebrows were quite black, and his hair, which was inclined to curl, was snowy white. There was a certain nice, delicate, sense of harmony and propriety about everything he did. For instance, if he wrote a note it was without erasures, placed in the most graceful manner on the paper, and sealed with care. He considered the peculiarities of every one as worthy of his notice, and never mortified the sensibilities of the most uneducated. It was a little thing, but it showed his polite consideration of others. One of the Senators from Arkansas always called the State Ar-*kan*-sas, the other pronounced it Ark-an-*saw*. As each rose to address the chair, Mr. Dallas acknowledged the salutation with the Senator's preferred pronunciation. He bowed his stately head and said, 'The Senator from Ar-*kan*-sas,' or 'The Senator from Ark-an-*saw*.' No matter how hot the debate, he always followed this rule. Once a Senator, perhaps tired of hearing Mr. Dallas called just,—made a most offensive attack upon him;

but the Vice-President neither called him to order nor evinced the least consciousness of being the object of animadversion, and it seemed to discomfort his assailant sadly, who finally sat down. His politeness was benevolence in small things.

"Mr. Benton was a man of rare personal dignity, and he never descended from the plane on which he had established himself. He was of medium height; but was, when I saw him, an old man, and had become so stout that it subtracted from his height somewhat. He had a rather swelling oratorical manner, but always something wherewith to maintain the dignity of his tone. Woe betide the man against whom he had a prejudice if, in an unwary hour, a statement unwarranted by indisputably attested facts had been made in contravention of any of his theories. In such a case one little page after another hied away to the library with small squares of paper memoranda for the librarian; each one returned with a ponderous tome, until sometimes, especially when Mr. Clay was speaking, breast high before him on his desk rose a rampart of formidable books. Statesmen's manuals, Jefferson's letters, geographies of almost all countries, maps, antiquated books of travel—everything poured aliment into this great and retentive mind, and served as a weapon of offence or defence. Everything he knew was at once available, because his repose of mind never permitted him to be flurried or disconcerted. He had reasoned out his policy, and was entirely sincere in his opinions.

"As soon as his antagonist took his seat, Mr. Benton arose, and with a courtly salutation to the Speaker, and one scarcely less so to the doomed one, he began as one would hunt a hare. He took each ill-considered postulate and chased it over heavy ground until nearly overcome, and then he set on his authorities in full cry. With his hand upon the first

book of the formidable collection before him, in most gentle tones he demonstrated that within those covers was the testimony of a patriot, an actor in the very event so strangely, so hideously misunderstood (with a little deferential bow and wave of the hand) by the gentleman. After the first blow he warmed to the work, and a finer display of varied reading in old and rare books, of statesman's lore, of burning eloquence, keen satire, and exalted Romanesque declamation could hardly be imagined. 'Friends, countrymen and lovers,' would have seemed a natural invocation from him, and most people gladly listened that they might hear. I did. He had a habit of talking to himself as he walked home, and Grund, a Hessian reporter of the Senate, described him in a letter to the New York Herald thus: 'I saw Mr. Benton walking up the avenue today, keeping up a gentle remonstrance with himself for being so much greater than the rest of the world.'

"It made the women feel profound who heard him, and was for them a cheap and charming education in our governmental history. He never became so irritated (after I knew him) that he would not suffer any reasonable interruption by question or explanation; but nothing discomposed, daunted, or broke the silver threads of his argument. He calmly took them up again and wove the net tightly about his victim. He answered everything with a provoking kind of assured triumph that was so hard to bear because there was so little which could be disputed in the facts arrayed. But when Mr. Clay confronted him, it was

> 'Worth ten years of peaceful life,
> One glance at their array.'

"Their policy, their ideas, their education, their methods of oratory, their moral standards, everything differed. Each hated the other with the most unaffected bitterness. Mr. Benton's mailed glove lay always before the Senator from Kentucky; and not infrequently, when Mr. Benton had finished a noble argument, studded all over with darts of satire or vague references to the past, that stung and clung to Mr. Clay until he was trembling with fury, he would sit down with a fine air of having been void of offence and in charity with all men.

"Mr. Clay, who was a very impressive man, but not of the leonine character like his opponent, would rear his tall form, turn his blazing eyes on the Speaker, and begin with all amenities of debate to 'puncture the Senator's balloon;' but Mr. Benton would throw down a little more ballast, and as he rose out of reach Mr. Clay would pour out a tide of keen, gentlemanly invective, and invoke memories not understood very often by the Senate, but infuriating in the extreme to his antagonist, and then came as a grand tourney and clash of equal minds in desperate encounter of angry wit as one could hear. They doubled and returned upon each other in feint and foil and deadly thrust; then the followers and close friends of each would ask to interpose a word, perhaps, to permit the contestants to get cool. But one day a Whig Senator from a Southern State, full of ardent affection for Mr. Clay, interrupted him just as he was bearing down in splendid style upon his antagonist, and Mr. Clay spoke aloud, 'Sit down, sir, I can defend myself; sit down.' Mr. Benton sent a soft smile of sympathy and amusement flying across, and the audience was with the Southern Senator, and Mr. Clay lost his point.

"While Mr. Benton would be in full career demolishing

some lesser man, Mr. Clay would cast a meaning look at him, and in a stage aside suggest a response; and then, no matter what the subject, in some way among the warp and woof of it, Mr. Benton would weave in Mr. Clay, who, always lance in hand, pushed on to the fight; and all smaller people stood aside for the two champions.

"Mr. Calhoun never willingly engaged in these tilts. He was anxious about the policy which he thought it best to adopt; for this he plead with hurried, earnest, clear reasoning, never hesitating for a word, or indulging in any unnecessary blame or personalities. If he was misunderstood, he arose in an enthusiastic, quick manner, and repeated his assertion verbatim. Mr. Benton had no admiration for his political theses, but utter confidence in his simple honesty, and so they generally came to a friendly armistice."

Quoting from her husband Varina wrote: "Mr. Davis, only a few years ago, wrote of Mr. Calhoun: 'In my early manhood I enjoyed his personal acquaintance, and perhaps more of his consideration, from the fact that, as a Secretary of War, he gave me the appointment as a cadet. When, in 1845, I entered the House of Representatives, he was a Senator. I frequently visited him at his lodgings. His conversation was both instructive and perculiarly attractive. He and his colleague, the impulsive, brilliant orator, Mr. McDuffie, did not fully concur on the great question of the day—notice to Great Britain to terminate the joint occupancy of Oregon—and their comparison of views, which, on one occasion I was permitted to hear, was deeply interesting.'

"It will be remembered," she continues with vivid recollections of the past, "that Mr. Calhoun was induced to leave the repose his impaired health required, and return to the Senate, because of the threatened danger of war with

Great Britain. War was to him an evil which only the defence of the honor and right of his country would justify. That made him the advocate of the War of 1812, but in 1845 he saw no such justification, and was therefore in favor of negotiation, by which it was believed the evils of war could be avoided without sacrifice of the honor or rights of our country.

"As a Senator he was a model of courtesy; he listened attentively to each one who spoke, neither reading nor writing when in his seat, and, while his health permitted, was punctual and constant in attendance. He conducted his correspondence by rising at dawn and writing his letters before breakfast. Had he been the Senator of a new State, this would hardly have been possible.

"Issues growing out of the disposal of the public lands within the States occupied much of the time of Congress, and for this and more important reasons he proposed, for certain considerations, to surrender the public lands to the public lands to the new States in which they lay. This was but another exhibition of his far-reaching wisdom and patriotism, as shown by his argument for the measure. Always earnest, often intense in debate, he never practiced *ad captandum* devices, seldom sought the aid of illustration, simile, or quotation, but concisely and in logical sequence stated his views like one demonstrating a problem, the truth of which was so clear to his mind that he could not doubt its acceptance by all who listened to the proof."

This last is in the nature of the opinion—frequently referred to by historians that she expressed of her husband on first meeting him. A like remark she made about Mr. Calhoun has already been noted and it would seem from the coincidence that there was something in the personality of

Jefferson Davis and John C. Calhoun that involuntarily struck her as being similar. "Perhaps" she continues of the man who next to her husband held her warmest public admiration "he was too little of a party man to believe, as the English parliamentarian said, that he had known opinions, but had not known votes to be changed by a speech.

"Wide as was his knowledge, great as was his wisdom, reaching toward prophetic limit, his opinions were but little derived from books or conversation. Data he gathered on every hand, but his ideas were the elaboration of his brain, were as much his own as is honey, not of the leaf, but of the bag of the bee.

"Mr. Cass, who was a very large, fleshy person, always warm, and obliged to use a fan, which was the largest palm-leaf that I ever saw, fanned himself industriously until some one either attacked his resolutions or his political record; then, in clear, statesmanlike logic, very devoid of ornamentation or rhetoric, he said what he thought; but, if one after another sprung into the debate, the contention somewhat confused him and he was not at his best. No one wrote better than Mr. Cass. He was one of the kindest-hearted men in the world, and if he had to say no to any one, could not do it in person, but dismissed the applicant, who, friendly but uncertain, waited, quite buoyed up by hope, to receive in a few hours a courteous though decided refusal. Mr. Cass was testy sometimes, but it was the testiness of an overworked man, not an ill-natured one. Nothing annoyed him like being called a 'Michigander'; he said the name was suggestive.

"Mr. Webster sat to the right of Mr. Cass, and no words can describe the first impression he made upon me. I had heard of him, and spent long hours in reading aloud his

speeches in the National Intelligencer when a mere child, and to see him was like looking at Jungfrau, or any other splendid natural phenomenon. There was no doubt as to where he sat, for the conviction of his identity was forced upon one when he turned his masive, overhanging forehead, with those great speculative, observant eyes full of lambent fire. He was as careful as a woman about the delicate neatness of his attire. He generally wore a dress coat, well adjusted and of the finest material, spotless linen, and silk stockings with slippers, which in those days were called 'pumps,' tied in a bow on the instep of his shapely feet. He, like Mr. Calhoun, always listened most attentively to any Senator who was speaking; but Mr. Webster, except when Mr. Calhoun or some other intellectual giant had the floor, had the air of protecting indulgence that a superior being might wear to an inferior. He was rarely offensive, but sometimes showed a dignified indulgence to weakness that was hard to bear. He never was voluble. A strong instance of the brevity of his wit was given once, when it had been expected that Mr. Webster would be nominated for the Presidency, but Messrs. Bell and Everett were chosen for the ticket. After the nomination was made, some people went up to Mr. Webster's house to serenade him. He was irritated and disappointed, and just composed himself to sleep when the Marine Band blared out 'Hail to the Chief.' He did not appear for some time, and when the cries of 'Webster! Webster!' became tumultuous, he put his head out the window and said: 'My friends, the sun rules the day, and mankind watches his coming and going; but where, can you tell me, where, the stars go in the morning?—they are seen no more. Goodnight.' So he shut the window and retired.

"Mr. Benton used to get very tired of the long speeches in the Senate, for he, too, listened attentively. One day a certain Senator, who spoke on all occasions, and for hours at a time, had consumed the day and worn out every one. As the dusk lowered upon the hall Mr. Benton arose, and in his deep voice moved an adjournment. 'For,' said he, in his grand manner, 'we are worse than the villeins, sir, worse than the villeins; they had their allotted time for work, but we are kept here, sir, until the stars shine out.' But there was an hour in the day that came to be recognized as one that Mr. Benton would have. About midday, or perhaps three o'clock, he always rose and left the chamber to take his paralyzed wife out for an airing. Generally he brought her, with infinite tenderness, to the Capitol grounds, seated her on a bench in a pleasant shade, and no young lover could try more sedulously than he to amuse and comfort her. She seemed to be most happy when with him, and it was a familiar sight to see him picking flowers for her as they first peeped up in the early Spring. He introduced me to a lady once—'Mr. C, a friend of my wife's, madam; need I say more?'

"I met him at an unusual hour one day, going toward the Senate, and said, 'You are unusually late are you not?' 'Yes,' said he, 'my wife would not let me go until I took her to Jessie Anne's (Mrs. Fremont). Jessie Anne is a charming woman, and my wife is a judge of women, madam—a judge of women.' He had a habit of accentuating his opinions or remarks by repetition. He was one of the very few great men who did not lose something by close proximity; he was certainly a power among men.

"Not far from Mr. Benton sat Dixon H. Lewis, of Alabama, one of the brightest men of his day, and intellectually

and untiringly active; but he weighed, before he had attained his greatest size, five hundred pounds, and must have weighed more when I first saw him. A chair was made for him, because he could not use those of ordinary size. He always commanded the confidence of his party and State, and the attention of the Senate.

"Then there was John Bell, of Tennessee, and honest John Davis, of Massachusetts—kindly dignified gentlemen; James M. Mason and R. M. T. Hunter, of Virginia; splendid old Colonel Butler, of South Carolina, whose head was as white as cotton, though his eyes were bright, his eyebrows black and strongly marked, and his brave spirit was as young as the youngest of the Senators." Among those she recalled were "David Atchinson, a solemn, literal, tender man of a tall ungainly figure—he was the friend of Mr. Davis's boyhood; King, of Alabama, a man as elegant as he was sound and sincere; General Dodge, under whom Mr. Davis had served in the West; he was straight, active, prompt, and had a certain wariness of manner which suggested an Indian hunter, which he had been for the best part of his life; a General Augustus Dodge his son; Mr. Pearce, of Maryland, a refined scholarly man, to whom the institutions for promoting science in America owed very much, and who to his friends and faith was true in every regard; Mr. Simon Cameron, cheerful and wily; gentle, sensible Mr. Bradbury, of Maine; Colonel Dix, of New York, another one of Mr. Davis's old friends who looked very reserved and soldierly among the political men about him; Reverdy Johnson, of Maryland, a witty, graceful man, eloquent and sympathetic in the extreme—his appearance somewhat marred by one eye having been injured in a duel. He was universally beloved by the gentlemen of the Senate. With these and many others of re-

nown, one tall form 'when seen became a part of sight'—that of Sam Houston. He was considerably over the ordinary height—six feet four at least. He had a noble figure and handsome face, but he had forgotten Polonius's advice, 'Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy, but not express'd in fancy.' He rejoiced in a catamount skin waistcoat; it was very long-waisted, and his coat was left ostentatiously open to show it. Another waistcoat, which he alternated with the catamount, was of a glowing scarlet cloth. His manner was very swelling and formal. When he met a lady he took a step forward, then bowed very low, and in a deep voice said, 'Lady, I salute you.' It was an embarrassing kind of thing, for it was performed with the several motions of a fencing lesson. If she chanced to please him, at the same or the next interview he generally took a small snakeskin pouch from his pocket and pulled out from it a little wooden heart, the size of a twenty-five cent piece, and presented it with, 'Lady, let me give you my heart.' These hearts he whittled all day long in the Senate, and had a jeweller to put a little ring in them. There was a certain free, stolid manner that suggested his long residence with the Indians. A favorite story of his was that he met Mr. Davis at a sutler's store in the West, and introduced himself to him. After talking a little while with him, General Houston said, 'The future United States Senator salutes the future President.' My husband remembered something of the kind, but not clearly enough to state it.

"As will be seen," the interesting *Memoir* continues "the Senate was made up of more than ordinarily respectable men, and a more imposing deliberative body one could hardly find. It was a severe ordeal for a young man when he engaged one of these dignified old men in a debate, who, to great acquire-

ments, added stores of memories, and who often explained crises in the political world from the stand-point of the responsible agents.

"It was the 21st of February, in this year, that ex-President John Quincy Adams sank in his seat on the floor of the House. As he was borne to the Vice-President's room he murmured, 'This is the last of earth—I am composed.' He died, after lying insensible for two days. Alert, determined, useful and eloquent to the last hour of his service in the House, he was mourned by all who knew him."[1]

[1] At the time Mrs. Davis wrote her *Memoir* she had had little practice in sustained literary effort. In view of this fact the vigor and ease of her style and her general erudition cause one to wonder what she might have accomplished in authorship had she devoted her earlier years to writing. Taken all in all her *Memoir* of her husband ranks her among the foremost American authors of her period.

CHAPTER XXII

WAR WITH MEXICO

THERE were now daily discussions in both Houses of Congress relative to the boundary line of Texas, the Rio Grande finally being accepted as the line of its separation from Mexico. With this the situation in Texas grew more exciting each day and one with an unprejudiced mind when reading the Congressional records of that time will readily discover that Jefferson Davis of all that brilliant body—more brilliant than during the waning fifties, knew more about the great unoccupied West, its needs and possibilities than any member of Congress. Whigs generally opposed the war, and Abraham Lincoln won his first recognition in Congress in opposition to it.

Varina looked on with increasing pride in her husband's efforts as the discussions each day grew warmer. His first speech made in February to a Committee of the whole on the Oregon question had been successful. It was partly in defense of the Southern position in the matter though it breathed deeply of love of country as a whole. It was a manly utterance and attracted much favorable attention and comment from both Houses of Congress. With the speech made on the following March 16, in connection with 'a bill granting appropriations for certain harbors' in which he thought there had been a lax interpretation of the Constitution he began his life long plea for a strict construction of that instrument and the position of the States under its provisions.

War with Mexico was now being prophesied each day.

Texas in 1845 had been annexed to the United States and was about to be invaded by Mexican troops to recover what that country believed to be territory of its own.

Jefferson Davis' first session in Congress did not come to a close before war clouds were in reality hovering all over the vast country. President Polk realized that to the new State of Texas he could not refuse the protection she now expected and to which she had a right. One thousand and five hundred troops were immediately sent under the command of General Taylor to defend the newly acquired territory. At Corpus Christi he was joined by a large reinforcement of regulars and volunteers.

Excitement over the war grew daily rising above all other questions before the public. A number of the Southern States were voluntarily preparing to go to the relief of Texas and Jefferson Davis was not surprised when he received an announcement through Colonel James Roach, a messenger who had been sent from Vicksburg, that he had been elected Colonel of the First Mississippi Regiment for the defense of Texas. The trouble between the United States and Mexico had now reached the acute stage, in fact the two countries were already at war with each other. Without a moment's hesitation Varina says her husband accepted the command of the Regiment. It was an organization whose history could be traced to the First Battalion of Mississippi troops that went with Governor W. C. C. Claiborne from Natchez to New Orleans in 1803 to receive from the Ambassadors of Napoleon the Louisiana Purchase. It was reorganized at Vicksburg and only awaited the arrival of Jefferson Davis to hasten to the scene of war.

It was the last days of June when Mrs. Davis and her husband made their preparations to leave Washington for

the South. The summer had begun to show full leaf and blossom. Vegetation was nearly a month later in the latitude of Washington than in the Natchez country and the kind of roses that had blown at "Brierfield" in the first days of June were now rioting in the nation's capital. Did Varina wish to leave it? In view of the approaching separation it could be easily believed that she did not—even dreaded to do so. Writing of his appointment in long years after she calls it "the dreadful call." But her confidence in her husband was supreme and whatever he decided to do that she believed to be the right thing. And now he was once more about to change the current of their lives. Answering to some sacrificial instinct that stirred him in behalf of freedom and conscious of an intense devotion to the West where his young manhood had been spent he was obsessed with the thought of going to its relief. Had his ambition for a political career waned, or had his love for Varina cooled? Had the names of Forts Crawford, Winnebago and Gibson stirred memories that would not down? The young wife to her credit made little complaint that any normal woman would not have made. That her faith in him was not disturbed is evident throughout. Whatever may have been her preferences contrary to his decision or if there were any, no word of hers is left to show. Whether she had grown to like the gay, spectacular life of the nation's capital and found in her husband's prestige means for the social excitement that appeals to the average woman, or whether she feared to see him go so far from her in the first few months of their wedded life are questions that may be answered in the fact that after the closest inspection of all records concerning her neither of these things seem to have had any influence upon her. So far, though not losing in the slightest

its own individuality her life had been merged in his as a helpful force and incentive. Thwarting his purpose seems never to have suggested itself to her mind. She says proudly that "he eagerly and gladly accepted the appointment." She repeated it with as much pride to her family and friends at Natchez and to her old tutor who with a tender pitying smile she did not understand, discovered in her nature a new power —the one of sacrifice. Had she caught the light so soon from the man or had it been hers at birth—a heritage bestowed upon one of whom there would be much expected? She had not yet realized all that their separation would mean for her, and the fact was furthermore robbed of its poignancy in the thought that they were going home, to her mother from whom she had dreaded to be separated—to her father, her young brothers and sisters, her tutor and innumerable friends —home to all from which she had been separated but little. This immediate prospect with its keen anticipation made their departure from Washington, so unexpected, seem not as a circumstance shaping her life. Always she would feel the influence of the present, the obvious, the tangible, though she had her inspirational hours when her God was all in all to her, nearer perhaps than He comes to most people and giving her more happiness since her faith in Him was of a nature and quality that frees rather than binds the spirit. She often told her friends that she could not bear the man or woman who placed rites and method before compassion and charity and in this impressive sense of the spiritual she found her outlook.[1]

They traveled post homeward she says over the same rough and dangerous route, known as the National, that they had gone with such painful effort during the cold De-

[1] Conversations with contemporaries.

cember days of the previous year. Summer had changed the country into one of such marvelous beauty that she, always enthusiastic over nature's varied spectacle, forgot for the moment the separation awaiting her in the future in the lovely prospect around her. The mountains the same that had frowned upon them with sides beetling with snow clad firs, a sublime picture that compensated her, she says, for every hardship then endured, were now smiling down upon them clothed in rosy robes of laurel which is in full bloom at this season of the year. Though long years had passed she recalls the beauty of the picture in her *Memoir*. The man at her side, too, enjoyed intensely the enchanting scene around them, not with the spontaneity of the woman it is true but with an equal warmth.

Their respite was only as a flash light in the dark. They had not been on the road many days before a heavy rumbling noise that sounded of artillery wagons was heard a few yards ahead of the rattling stage coach in which they traveled. "It was," she says, "Duncan's Battery going down to Mexico." For the first time she grew conscious of the true situation. Her husband hurriedly left the stage for some eager inquiry of "the fair-haired strippling who sat on the caisson, then came back alert and flushed by the anticipation of his prospective campaign which seemed to me to take shape and become real after I saw the first harbinger of war."[1] She was beginning to experience in a vague way the loneliness that attends sacrifice. His constant pre-occupation on the journey with a small volume of military tactics began to irritate her. She remonstrated with him, she confesses, for she was beginning to feel unnecessary to him—out of his life. But there were hidden resources in her nature; she soon

[1] *A Memoir*, Vol. I.

recovered herself, and, getting her bearings, sympathized with his enthusiasm as he explained "agreeably" she says, the "mysteries of enfilading, breaking column, hollow squares and what not." Still, interested as she was in everything that appealed to him the meaning of the choice he had made as it related to both had begun to possess her. It is clear, however, that she with more than usual heroism for one so young braced herself for the separation. With a modesty that seeks to cover her private grief and disappointment at the time she asks us to "think only of all the unsophisticated country brides throughout the country to know what the parting cost us and how sad it was."

Their journey home, coming to an end the following few days at "Brierfield" were principally taken up with preparations for her husband's departure which she could see were meant for an absence of many months if not years. The question as to whether he would take with him the trusted and faithful body servant, James Pemberton, who had been with him in the West and was now his foreman on the Brierfield plantation came up for anxious discussion. The master was pleased and touched at the slave's decision. His master was very dear to him, dearer in truth than the young mistress, but he in some manner commendable to his stage of civilization divined that the best service he could render him and one that would please him most was the service that he could give the young wife left behind. Also long care of the plantation had rooted the black man in its soil. Not able to see that his master's pathway lay far away from the "cat and clay" walls that they had both built in youth he felt that it was especially his duty to keep the plantation in order for his return. That his master would not dwell there as he had done in the past and as his brother did

at "The Hurricane" never once suggested itself to his simple mind. His departure was only an unusual occurrence that would not happen again in years. His master's rightful place was at "Brierfield" and it must be his daily task to care for it in his absence.

This matter definitely settled Joseph Davis selected his brother a servant that he felt would be a faithful friend from among his own negroes. His young brother's patriotism and the wide spread reputation he was making in political circles were sources of the deepest pleasure to the elder brother whose own ambition had to a large extent become submerged in furthering the affairs of the younger brother.

Varina proudly tells us that her husband left home on an Arabian horse named "Tartar" with a stout serviceable one provided for his body servant Jim, to join his regiment in New Orleans. She does not tell us whether he left her at "Brierfield," at "The Hurricane," or at her parent's home in Natchez; but from all she says one concludes that he left her at "Brierfield." She was very young, madly in love with him and of an ardent and somewhat excitable temperament that had not yet been schooled and disciplined by life's varied demands, and the separation, her first bitter experience, must have been for her a terrible ordeal. But whatever the separation from her husband had cost her, no mere sentimentality nor melodrama appealed to her. Judging from the intensity of her nature she must have felt it deeply, but she would bear herself worthy of the man whom she believed was worthy of a woman's best efforts. This would always be her mental attitude, and was in her thought during the rough experience among the ice floes on the Ohio when they had gone the previous year to Washington causing her to bear without

too much complaint the hardships of travel in her effort to win his confidence and respect though she admits that she and her niece, Miss Bradford, were greatly "fatigued" and "bruised black and blue" when they reached the National Capitol.[1] Besides she was intensely patriotic herself which enabled her to more readily understand the strong and fervid patriotism of the man who had thrust high office and position aside to go to the defense of this invaded border of his country. The West was to him a beloved land, saturated with memories of his youth, and in its hour of peril he could not withstand the demand that it made of him. The young wife, still at that day regarded as not much more than a bride, understood the husband's position; while it was torture to her to be separated from him her own sense of duty was keen. They felt the same way about many of the stern obligations of life and this made their separation more bearable. The prospect nevertheless was a dark one for the wife. They had in the short while of their married life grown to be very congenial. Turn where she may none could compensate for his absence. True there were her parents and young brothers and sisters whom she loved with more than the usual devotion of kindred, her beloved tutor and numerous others for whom she felt the deepest affection, but after giving lavishly of her love to these there was but one passion that consumed her whole being for which she could joyfully make sacrifice—could gladly suffer and endure all things. She might make sacrifices for others —for her parents, for the young brother who, also, had responded to the patriot blood in his veins and was then with the volunteer forces enlisted for the Texas border, but it would have been with no such commingling of pain and

[1] *A Memoir,* Vol. I.

ecstasy as that she experienced in sacrificing herself for the man who held her whole thought, the man for whose moral life she now, young and lighthearted as she was, felt, a deep sense of responsibility. Could any woman do better than the young Varina was now doing? The brother for the strong and heedless love she bore him she might have called back but she would never have asked the husband to stay. The fear that she might in a weak moment prove recreant and unworthy of the trust he reposed in her at times possessed her; and yet it was "like death" she confided to her intimate friends "to see him go."[1] With many such troubled and painful thoughts confusing her brain she had Andromache-like stood in the door way bidding him farewell—she who had cared only to be a farmer's wife had become a soldier's wife.

[1] Conversations with descendants of contemporaries.

CHAPTER XXIII

A SOLDIER'S WIFE

After Jefferson Davis' departure for Mexico Mrs. Davis spent several weeks with her parents at Natchez principally for the purpose of consoling and comforting them over the separation from their young son, Joseph Davis Howell, who had enlisted in the First Mississippi Regiment. The young man took great pride in the fact that he was to serve under Jefferson Davis for whom he had formed a strong attachment. Varina was devoted to the handsome young brother, who had been her constant playfellow during childhood, and shared her parents' uneasiness lest his "tall figure should become a special mark for the enemies' aim." Together the women spent the time bemoaning their losses as only women can at such times. They would not have their men recreant —far from it, and yet it is certain that women have no love for war.

People it is said flocked to the Howell home to see Varina, and to "cheer her up," they said, "while her husband was away." They had always admired her very much and many had an increasing respect for her as being the wife of one who was fast distinguishing himself in the class with S. S. Prentiss. There had been times when even old friends sometimes expressed their surprise that William B. Howell's daughter had chosen a husband outside of her family's social position. The social position of her husband had constantly been the subject of comment among the Whigs who took

much pride in the fact that their party represented the best society of the Natchez portion of the State. More than once the young wife in the past had been stung to the quick by shafts of careless tongues. Their attitude had now changed and to a large extent these had become reconciled.

"There's nothing like a woman's family pulling a man up socially" they had whispered in the past. "No coperas briches by a long shot—he is anybody's equal—Whig or Democrat" they were now contending.[1] With this change of front Varina's visits home were made very pleasant. In later years she learned to distinguish between real friendship and that which follows after good fortune; but now she enjoyed the tribute too much to examine into its motive. It was his due and every one should feel that way about him she reasoned. In the main she was of a forgiving nature, resent as she might an affront at times, it took repeated provocation to permanently estrange her. One of her favorite remarks was that "life was too short to bear animosities."[2]

Her tutor continued his deep interest in her and during these visits home she spent many pleasant hours with him in deep discussions of the various political and governmental questions and problems then before the country. She knew that he both liked and admired her husband, and with this added link in their friendship she felt that it was one of her most precious possessions.

Among her numerous friends the elder Mrs. Coulson, who had been a school-mate, came often to the "Briers" during her visits home. To this friend perhaps more than to any other next to her mother she confided those secrets suited

[1] A term of ridicule applied in derision of the new corner from the ranks of the poor whites who dyed their own clothes, often in some such phrase as, "The coperas briches (breeches) still show."

[2] Mrs. H. B. Kells.

for women's ears.[1] Her desire for children and the fear that she would not be blessed with motherhood, the continued delicate state of her health that at times grew to be serious, and her grief over her husband's probable exposure to death on the battle field, all were at times painful fears that she expressed to her close friend as any normal young girl would be likely to do. She was not of a gloomy temperament and many diversions were planned for her friend who with a number of others she took home with her, for a stay of several weeks when she returned to "Brierfield." The young wife in all probability would have preferred to be alone that she might give all her thought to her absent loved one who was then in camp at Brazos, St. Iago near Point Isabel. Letters came to her frequently from him and though her young guests found her a "charming and thoughtful hostess" they could see that the coming of the mail from the Palmyra post office was the one thing that excited her more than any event of the day.[2]

On the departure of her young friends Mr. Joseph Davis came over from "The Hurricane" and after a conference to which James Pemberton and several others of the more intelligent negroes were admitted it was agreed that Varina should stay at "The Hurricane" and with the aid of himself and the faithful James supervise the affairs on the "Brierfield" plantation during her husband's absence. The house was closed except when she had the servants to open and air it. She loved it with something of the passion she felt for her husband. It was the work of his hands, a part of him, and everywhere she turned and on every object she

[1] Mrs. Coulson to Mrs. H. B. Kells.
[2] A small post office near "Brierfield."

looked she could feel his presence near her.[1] It was more —it was theirs—for she felt in some sure way of having become a vital part of his life, else she could never have agreed to their separation. It is the doubting who take no risks her adored "Great Heart" had taught her. And not only "Brierfield" but all things would be shared so closely in future that it would be a question as to which was the original possessor, whether of faiths and creeds or of things material. In this particular they were not unlike the people about them. Marriage was not regarded lightly at that day, but held to be the most sacred institution of society. There was very little divorce in the South at that period of history. The marriage state was generally one of happiness; at least it was a condition from which few cared to be relieved, and, by women especially, held inviolable.

Nearly every day the young wife rode over to the Brierfield place.[2] Although not having been reared on a plantation, she was familiar with plantation life, having often visited her grandfather Kempe's large cotton farms near Natchez, on which her grandmother resided a number of years after his death. "The Briers" itself was not in the city limits though its site on the river was distant from the plantations. The first families of that period, however, more often than otherwise, lived on the great plantations, and through many avenues Varina's association with the country was close, her love of it sincere. She had come of a strain that had settled some of the first counties of Virginia; and love of the open country was strong in her,

[1] Brierfield was never deeded to Jefferson Davis and that fact gave him and Mrs. Davis great concern in later life and resulted in a law suit on the part of the younger generation after Joseph E. Davis' death when Jefferson Davis' title was cleared up.

[2] *A Memoir*, Vol. I.

becoming a subconscious imperative that she could never quite ignore. Not even the lure of the Nation's Capital, so seductive to the average young woman, was at that time strong enough to lessen in any way her love of nature which had come down to her through many generations of landowners. Daily the Brierfield place grew dearer to her. Here with him, and some day with children gathered about them, they would spend their lives.[1] With such thoughts filling her mind, she spent the days going back and forth from "The Hurricane" to "Brierfield." Every shrub and flower of the latter were tended with utmost care.[2] The apricot seed the Pilot's wife had given her on her way to Washington she and her husband had planted before he left for Mexico. The spot had been marked by a stake which she often examined to see if it was still sufficient to protect the place from careless trampling, figuring it out in her mind that the seed would sprout the following spring. Both she and the husband seemed to have a passion for planting seeds, and setting out orchard trees and shrubs. And one finds them often engaged in this pleasant occupation.

As foreman of the plantation James Pemberton was much superior to the white overseers usually employed by Southern planters, but all were not as faithful as the foreman and the more important interests at "Brierfield" suffered some in the absence of the master. The house was closed, but the servants, under her supervision, while she remained at "The Hurricane" opened and aired it several times during the

[1] Conversations with Mrs. H. B. Kells.

[2] Old court records show that Mr. Joseph Davis later became very arbitrary with all his relatives, including Varina, in family matters, but it has been clearly shown that he regarded "Brierfield" as Jefferson's property, the title of which she was often twitted about by one of Joseph Davis' daughters.

month. "Feathers," Black Mammy Kempe had insisted, should be "thoroughly aired once every week." The Grahams of Virginia had made this a rule along with another very important handed down in the Howell family by the old Kempe and Graham house servants, the very important one being that all the beds in the house "mus shorely be 'nointed afo' de President comes in." Spring cleaning was evidently set for a date to precede this important occasion, which in Virginia took precedence of all others, so much so that it had impressed itself indelibly upon the minds of the negro house servants, as a date before and after from which to reckon. Mississippi was not so well acquainted with Presidents, but the Virginia servants rarely forgot their early precepts, and through these many of the old domestic customs prevailed in the new states.

Varina, as a child, had been greatly impressed with her grandmother's systematic, orderly habits, and also with the negroes' stories of how the Grahams did things "back home." When left to her own initiative, she gayly told her girl friends that she recalled many of these practical methods as she busied herself in keeping the Brierfield house. In after life she developed a marked ability for home-making, which she attributed not alone to her mother, but to the old Virginia pioneer grandmother of whom H. S. Foote, a native of Prince William County, Virginia, wrote in such high terms of praise.[1]

But "Brierfield" did not claim Varina's first attention. She kept in the closest touch with the progress of the war and, despite its growing importance and significance each day, could not resist the hope that it would soon be over and leave her husband free to return to her. As the days passed,

[1] A Casket of Reminiscences by H. S. Foote.

strive as she might to resist it, his absence and the strain of waiting told upon her.[1] The warm season, too, with the late August and early September heat parching and drying up the fields and forest had a debilitating and depressing effect. The slight improvement in health that she had experienced in Washington was now gone and to some the thin, sharp shouldered young woman with large, hollow dark eyes and sallow complexion was no longer beautiful, persistently claim it for her as old acquaintances did. A visitor to "The Hurricane" writing to her son in after years of her visit there at this time describes her as a "tall, slight, ugly young married woman," adding that "she made a great pet of you." To the lonely young wife the visitor's baby then taking its first steps, as the mother records—was doubtless an object of much interest.[2] She often thought of herself as the mother of a child, a child beautiful and well-favored in every way, in which her husband would take delight, a child that would grow to be like him.

[1] Conversations with descendants of contemporaries.
[2] Reminiscences of Mrs. M. P. H. Roach.

CHAPTER XXIV

MONTEREY AND BUENA VISTA

VARINA was as happy as could be expected for any young married woman to be in the absence of a husband on the battlefield. Though her mother was concerned about her health, and some said she was losing her beauty everyday, her friends could not think of her otherwise than as a beautiful young woman, scarcely more than a child, to be loved and consoled in the absence of her husband in the army. There was "nothing serious the matter," she was only a little "thin and run down, all of which would come right in a few years," the country women said with confident glances at each other.

Her own letters to her husband held no hint of the condition of her health. Some deep instinct, even at that early age, and in keeping with the time, warned her not to stand in his way in the accomplishment of his aims and purposes. All the women about her were like that, and she was not to be outdone in wifely duty. Though she had determined not to distress him with any depressing news concerning herself, and always sent him cheerful, humorous letters, her anxiety and depression became so great at times that she admits in her *Memoir* that her health was far from good. Unable on account of ill health to longer remain near "Brierfield" she left "The Hurricane" and went to Natchez to be with her parents. Through letters from his brother Joseph and the Howells, Jefferson Davis learned that his young wife's

health was very much impaired, and after the Battle of Monterey in which he won high distinction he decided to hurry home on a leave of absence. Obtaining a sixty day leave, which on account of the haphazard mode of travel of that period allowed him but two weeks in the United States, he set out eagerly on his return home. Her recollections of his arrival and numerous small incidents connected with it are given in several interesting paragraphs of her *Memoir*. She always writes of her emotions on such occasions with regretable restraint and with the marked delicacy that the age and time of her *Memoir* seemed to still demand of women, losing sight of self, even at times to the extinction of her own personality, in her eagerness and anxiety to give to the world a picture worthy of the husband.

Jefferson Davis' health had greatly improved on the western borders. Yet, in his early prime he retained much of his boyish enthusiasm and a certain youthful sweetness and graciousness of manner that made him very attractive. At the same time people felt the dominant power of the man. Of his home coming the wife wrote, "Colonel Davis left on a furlough for sixty days." (She liked his new title and used it frequently in her *Memoir* after he had attained more notable ones.) "He left the camp with a corporal's guard, went at great risk but without accident to Camargo, and rode Tartar down to take him home, for fear he might be shot in battle. When at the Brazos it was necessary to transfer the horse from a lighter to the ship, the sailors struck him, to force him to jump on the vessel. He reared and snorted, but the blow only enraged him. He could not be induced to stir. Colonel Davis told the sailors to let him alone, and, standing on the ship held the bridle, calling him gently by name. Tartar crouched like a cat, watched for the instant

when the lighter and ship were on a level, and then sprang lightly to his master's side, amid the cheers of the sailors."

An interesting story of this horse she further records revealing her aptness for remembering small incidents in her husband's life is that "when the reins was thrown over his neck at the battle of Monterey, instead of straying off, as was expected, to the regimental quarters, he galloped into a re-entering angle of Fort Teneria,, and stood trembling, but perfectly still, until the battle was over."

During Jefferson Davis' short stay at home he made his will, and among other things consulted James Pemberton, his faithful body servant, as to what he wished done in the matter of his liberty should he fall in battle. His preference was that "in case of the death of his master," to stay and take care of his young mistress, but he desired his freedom, "if anything should happen to her." "The will," she says, "was framed to suit his wishes, and a bequest of land or money as he might choose, added thereto." In connection with the fine sentiment expressed by the faithful slave, she takes occasion to say, "So confiding and affectionate was the relation of the master and the slave, that we who personally loved many of them, cannot now easily become reconciled to the attitude of alienation in which the negroes stand toward us."

At the end of his leave of absence Jefferson Davis returned to the seat of war and Varina faced another long period of anxious waiting. But her young spirit had been greatly stirred by the stories he told her of the exposure of the Texas borders to the enemy. She was now developing heroic qualities matching his own. With a steadier nerve she saw him leave the second time. The country must be defended if the liberties of the people were to be secured and insured

for all future years. She knew how he had always felt about the West. It had once been his home and now Texas was the apple of his eye. She must not chill his patriotic ardor so pronounced during young manhood. The admiration and confidence with which the people of the State now regarded him thrilled her with pride. She continued to follow every movement of the army especially that branch to which he was attached. All his letters were treasured and worn in her bosom for days. One from Agua Nueva, Mexico, dated February 8th, told her of his impatience for the battle that daily threatened. Another from Saltillo dated February 25 though reassuring in the matter of his safety filled her with alarm and distress. In it he said, "I wrote you a few days since anticipating a battle. We have had it. The Mississippians did well. I fear you may feel some anxiety for me, and write to say that I was wounded in the right foot, and remained on the field so long afterward that the wound has been painful, but is by no means dangerous. I hope soon to be up again. My friend, Mr. Crittenden, will write on this sheet to brother Joe, and give him more particulars."

Soon followed the letter breathlessly read and so dearly prized by herself and Joseph Davis from Thomas L. Crittenden giving an account of the battle of Buena Vista. From Saltillo he wrote:

"Dear Sir: We have had a glorious battle and victory. On the evening of the 22nd, the Mexicans, commanded by Santa Anna in person, having advanced to our position (which was about eight miles south of Saltillo, at a place called Buena Vista), the fight commenced between some light troops. This was, however, a mere skirmish, with which the main body of neither had anything to do, and was soon stopped by darkness.

About sunrise in the morning, however, the armies engaged and fought until three o'clock P. M., the object of Santa Anna, with an army of 20,000 men, being to drive General Taylor, who commanded barely 5,000 men, from his position. In this attempt, after the most desperate and gallant fighting, in which your brother bore a conspicuous part, Santa Anna was entirely foiled, and about midnight retreated with his army to Agua Nueva, about ten miles back, where he is now encamped with the remains, no doubt, of a defeated and demoralized army.

The regiment commanded by your brother won the admiration of all, and suffered, of course, severely, at least one hundred casualties, and among them 40 killed, and that too, when the regiment did not muster three hundred men upon the field of battle. Your brother received early in the action a very painful wound in the right foot, but did not leave the field until the battle was over, and a very glorious victory was won. The Mexican loss must have been very heavy; I cannot give you the details however. I have spoken particularly, indeed exclusively, of the Mississippi regiment, because I have not time to give you an account of the gallantry of almost all our troops. Your brother's wound is not at all dangerous, but in all probability he will not be able to walk for several months, at least, without a crutch. Our gallant old General has silenced all fires, front and rear, and proven himself for the hundredth time a hero.

P. S.—Your brother has just informed me that you and my father were old acquaintances and friends. I have been with your brother almost daily for several months, and have formed for him a great personal attachment; these things coupled, sir, make me feel toward you as an old acquaintance."

Varina could no longer restrain her self. With varied emotions of joy, distress and anxiety she "broke down completely" she says when they had finished reading the letter. "Her gratitude that he was not fatally wounded, and the thought that he was suffering and was deprived of her care and attention" all, she frankly confessed to friends, "unstrung her."[1] Irrespective of any egotism, she felt that she could care for him better than any one could at such a time. In her own family she had always been turned to in hours of distress and it had grown to be a habit with her to think that her loved ones needed her. Her father once said of her that whenever anything went wrong in the family he could always "depend on Varina to be a comfort and assistance to the rest."

Of her husband's wounds she wrote in after years: "When Colonel Davis was helped off his horse, in an almost fainting condition, his leg had swollen so that it filled his boot; pieces of his brass spur and of his stocking had been driven through his foot into the wound and become embedded there. Captain Eustis, a friend and comrade, sat by him all night and kept a stream of cold water pouring over the wound, which, his surgeon thought, prevented lockjaw."

Again she says, "General Taylor, when informed that Colonel Davis was killed, was so excited that he exclaimed, 'I will never believe it,' and sent one after another to inquire without waiting for an answer." Again that "The softhearted old hero found time to go himself after night to inquire about Colonel Davis."

The Crittenden letter brought the wife joy as well as pain. She would cease grieving and join in the widespread rejoicing that went on around her at news of her husband's gal-

[1] Conversations with descendants of contemporaries.

lant victory. In a dim but certain way, she began to realize that he belonged to others as well as to herself. Henceforth she must keep this in mind. It was strange, but she felt it was true. She heard it in the conversations of the people who gathered at "The Hurricane." She read it in the editorials of the leading newspapers. "He is going to do this and that for us in the future," they said and wrote of him in confident tones. When she went back to Natchez, she heard them talking of him in excited tones. Judge Winchester, spending the evening with other friends at "The Briers," noted with both pride and sympathy the renunciation going on in the soul of the young wife, renunciation that was not without a touch of self-commendation, which he encouraged as a means of consolation. If they were never to settle down at "Brierfield" and live like the other happy young married people in the country, she told her tutor bravely, but with a quiver of the lips and tears standing in her large dark eyes, she would try to be satisfied.[1] She believed that, left to his individual tastes and wishes, he would have preferred "Brierfield," its horses and fields. He never looked as happy and carefree to her, she says, as when riding about the broad open country. But no longer would she pine for the life that gave him entirely to her. His country needed him, and she would help rather than hinder him. She was beginning to understand that there, too, was a part that women of her day were expected to play in a drama seemingly arranged for men.

The grave decision appealed to the devoted tutor who commended her with the tenderness of a father and proudly repeated what she had said to her parents and others. Her unselfish conduct in the matter of her husband's absence

[1] Conversations with Mrs. H. B. Kells.

drew the entire community to her with a deeper affection; the country folk everywhere pronounced her the "best wife in the world for any man rising into prominence." Varina was not without a goodly share of vanity, and it pleased her very much that people admired her courage and fortitude upon this occasion, though her conduct had been natural and spontaneous.

She was always eager enough for her husband to be first flute, but she herself insisted on being heard, at that age scarcely knowing why, since the women about her were proud of being inarticulate in most matters. However, though better educated and more widely read than the women of her circle, she found much pleasure in the society of her sex. Being herself interested in so many things in which women were also interested, her intercourse with them was of a very pleasant and congenial nature. That they deferred to her in many things, as the shrewder neighbors claimed, can be believed, nor would it be too much to say that Varina to some extent expected it; but marked feminine tastes were characteristic of the female of that day and provided many tastes in common. While she at times and on certain subjects preferred to talk to her father, or her tutor the affairs of women always fascinated her. It has been said of her that no one could possibly take a deeper interest in the social happenings of the day. The spice of life, even to the extent of small talk and harmless gossip, was not taboo with her, though scandal she detested and warned all her associates not to retail it to her. "Tell me the gossip, but tell me no scandal" she gayly wrote a correspondent. In the company of the scholarly and well read she could even at this age bear herself with credit, enjoying a learned discus-

sion upon almost any subject.[1] However, at times the lighter vein was very agreeable to her. Her conversation, as her *Memoir* reveals, abounds with the small tidbits of humor that came her way through servants, and even through her foes, and often when it concerned herself. Of her husband at this period she wrote—and she liked best of all occupations to write of him—"At the time he figured so conspicuously in the Mexican war he was in the prime of life. He carried with him into the camp and on the battle field that native dignity which has characterized him in all his successes and adversities. In the dark prison, or as the chosen chief of millions of the proudest, noblest and truest people of any nation of the earth, he never forgot those noble attributes with which kind heaven had endowed him. He was a strict disciplinarian, and never relaxed the rigid military regulations in the least, not even when their term of service had nearly expired. He was nevertheless approachable to the lowest private in the army, and gave an attentive ear to all their grievances. He was jealous of the interests of his men."

[1] It has been said by contemporaries that both Jefferson Davis and Mrs. Davis were, on account of their different aspirations and obligations, sometimes thought to be by the large circle of the Davis kin more self-absorbed than they should be in their own affairs and that this did not set well with many of the numerous less distinguished relatives. At least whispers of sensitive remarks are heard through records of that day.

CHAPTER XXV

RETURN OF THE VOLUNTEERS

From the battle fields of Mexico Jefferson Davis was returning home. For many years at least, he would be "Colonel Jefferson Davis" to the great crowds that gathered to welcome him. The title sounded good to their ears still attuned to the marvelous military feats of Andrew Jackson with his Tennesseans and Mississippi Dragoons. Of the victories and honors that belonged to the Americans, the gallant young Colonel and his regiment had won a full share. He was returning wounded as was his second in command, the brilliant and erratic McClung.[1] They were also bringing home a large number of the dead in plain pine coffins, privates of the First Mississippi Volunteers who had paid the full price of liberty. The country thrilled with excitement and expectation. Monterey and Buena Vista were destined to become household words. The regiment landed in New Orleans with only one half of its original strength. At sight of the victors, and in realization of the great loss the command had sustained, the crowd gave vent to its emotion. The New Orleans Picayune carried the following tribute to the First Mississippi: "It is in no invidious spirit that the Mississippi Volunteers are selected for a public demonstration, as they

[1] Alexander K. McClung was a noted orator and duelist, having figured in seven duels. He was a native of Kentucky. He was brilliant but erratic with poetical gifts and subject to protracted spells of melancholia. He came to Mississippi and was deeply attached to his adopted state. His *Ode to Death* and an oration on the death of Henry Clay possess real literary merit.

are neighbors and friends, and, as it were, a part of us." Again the paper cried, "Yesterday was a day devoted by our citizens to the reward of patriotism and heroic deeds. It was a day appointed to receive men who had voluntarily left their homes to meet the public enemy, and had gallantly discharged the high duty they had assumed."[1] "To attempt," the paper proclaimed, "to describe the enthusiasm evinced on this occasion is in vain." The reporter continued, "A committee of reception had arranged a royal welcome for them. The volunteers debarked amid an immense crowd, who shouted themselves hoarse. The regiment was formed on Canal Street, and escorted by the Legion and several other divisions of the military of the city, among whom we noticed the German Yagers and Tigers; the whole, under the command of Major-General Lewis, moved toward Lafayette Square. A large assemblage of both sex had gathered, and amid the firing of cannon and the warm greetings of the people, the volunteers took their position around the stand of the orator."

The speaker was none other than Seargent S. Prentiss who had in the past met Jefferson Davis in a number of joint debates. He had been especially selected to deliver the address. Forgetting any pique he may have felt at the rising popularity of the Democratic leader he gave vent to his marvelous powers of oratory. It was among the last brilliant efforts of his life, and Varina records in her *Memoir* that a pleasant recollection of the oration remained with her husband down to old age.

When Prentiss had finished Jefferson Davis, who was "loudly called for," replied in a "warm and eloquent address in behalf of his own regiment, and in some measure in be-

[1] New Orleans Picayune June 9, 1847.

half of all volunteers." New Orleans had been and will always be just the atmosphere for such out-door demonstration, not forced nor artificial but spontaneous, genuine and partaking of the Latin abandon. On the present occasion the streets through which the procession moved were filled with spectators, the balconies of the houses packed with women and children. Not since General Jackson and his rugged army marched victoriously from the Chalmette Plains into the breathlessly waiting city had there been such a demonstration. Women in the balconies threw down "arms full of roses" as the regiment marched past, and "wild applause and congratulatory words of welcome reached the regiment below." With a fervor that equalled that of the men the lovely and elegant women of the city expressed their appreciation of the service his regiment had rendered the country.[1] One of the most comforting memories of his life, she says, came of the confidence and affection bestowed upon him by the women of the South.

When the speech making was over, the regiment "marched from Lafayette Square down to the Place d'Armes, where they partook of a luncheon prepared for them." The Place d'Armes is in the centre of a hollow square, one side of which is bounded by the Mississippi River. It must have been a striking sight, this immense company of people seated in front of the old cathedral and the Department of Justice, amid the shade of semi-tropical trees and surrounded by brilliant flowers that bloomed on the borders of the Square, the turbid "inland sea" flowing on the other side. All the balconies of the Pontalba building were crowded on either side with ladies in their summer garb, each one laden with

[1] New Orleans Picayune. *Memoir,* Vol. I.

wreaths and garlands of blossoms for the heroes of the hour.[1]

Varina impatiently awaited his arrival in Natchez. Both pride and love burned her heart like fire, still she held herself in hand, though at times the nervous strain was great. They were to arrive on a special steamboat that had been chartered for them. In company with her family, Mr. Joseph Davis, her tutor Judge Winchester, and a number of relatives and friends she waited anxiously and impatiently to be the first to meet him when he landed with the remnant of his regiment. The boat had been heralded and was steaming into view. A great concourse of people surged about them and crowded forward to the edge of the water and on board to welcome them, forgetful of all else but their own right to gaze upon the hero and his decimated columns. Again Varina was reminded that he belonged to the people as much as to herself. Would he always belong to them? The thought in a sense pleased her immensely but it was bitter, she confided to a friend, to think that she could not have him to herself for the first few hours of his arrival. Judge Winchester saw her perturbation and knowing the sacrifices she had made during his absence sought, she says, to console her.[2] Mr. Joseph Davis, too, almost beside himself with pride in the victories and honors that his younger brother had won, she says, whispered in her ear, with a beaming smile at his way of phrasing it, "You and I come first even if we must now come last—let them have him now —our time will come." The crowd parted a little for him as he came towards them. Yes, he was wounded—was on crutches and was still suffering. His pallor, drawn features,

[1] *A Memoir,* Vol. I.

[2] Conversations with descendants of contemporaries.

and wasted form, all told her better than words. She was deathly pale herself, but strove to hide her emotion. He was "tender and gracious in his manner towards her and she was wildly happy." The people about them grew more demonstrative. Every moment was one of ecstasy for her. He was not only the hero but he "looked every inch one." She could read the admiration they felt for him in their eyes.[1]

A bevy of young girls met the Regiment at the Bluff and crowned the officers with wreaths of roses, bright garlands that "swayed about their heads and dangled around their shoulders like many-colored ribbons." Not content with this, the "flags and banners were draped with garlands." This was followed with welcome addresses in the town hall to which the pathway of the Regiment, headed by its officers, was "thickly strewn with roses." Roses upon roses were flung to them from windows and door ways all along the route. When the demonstration was over, in a handsome barouche "covered completely with wreaths and garlands," her husband took her to the steamboat that was to take them up to Vicksburg. "The journey," she says, "was one long ovation"—at every stopping place "Cannon were fired," and in addition "addresses of welcome to which the commanders answered for the Regiment." In long years after she remembered every detail of the welcome home—with what nonchalance and at times embarrassment the young privates received the adulation, which they plainly said they rated "as so much flummery"—how they appeared after their exposure to the suns of Mexico—how the people cheered them—all proving her ability, in hours of great stir and excitement to be fully aware of what went on around her. Her clear mind received

[1] Confidences.

all impressions so distinctly that she had little trouble in after years in reproducing them.

The demonstration at Vicksburg was for anything more enthusiastic than at any point up the Mississippi—Vicksburg the small river city over which the spirit of a great history dimly hovered. Little did the happy young woman enjoying the honors and praise lavished upon the triumphant soldier at her side, dream that the dark and moody goddess Fate—call her what you may—mystical element or natural sequence, but hardly divine Providence, had fixed her burning eyes upon two in that great throng, and that she was one of these. But eschewing the occult and discarding the bombast—in more practical phrasing, with all her unusual discernment for one so young, she could not know that having once served them—the people—acceptably, these would demand further service, and having once broken their creatures to harness would drive them hither and yon to suit their every whim and caprice—people—*Andabatae* becoming each others fate and destiny. The wound and scar, always objects of worth to any cause, would in the present instance make the demand more urgent. But no, Varina, and she had a will of her own, decided on that very account that this would be the end of it. She had willingly and patriotically given him to his country, and now they would go home to "Brierfield," and this they did no sooner than the period of clamor and rejoicing was over.

The demonstration had been after the grandiloquent and pompous fashion and manner of the early Southerners whose sincerity nevertheless lent charm to everything they did. To describe it with a lack of the effusive, public sentiment of the day, would not make of it, nor of the time, an accurate reproduction. They were the kind of people to make much

of their heroes, both Whig and Democrat being alike in this characteristic, alike because, when all was told both were being melted in the same pot in the old colonial strongholds of the far South—Natchez, New Orleans, Mobile, strongholds that had been constantly replenished by the best Anglo-American blood.

CHAPTER XXVI

"BRIERFIELD" REOPENED

VARINA found her husband a very sick man. The comforts and calm of country life were best for him in his semi-invalid condition, and none better than the wife knew this. Once more in the quiet atmosphere of "Brierfield" they were happy and contented, despite the wounded foot, from which he was still suffering. In writing of his wound she says, "He suffered from it for five years and was unable to dispense with his crutches for two years. The bone exfoliated and pieces that had been shattered worked out or were extracted by a surgeon causing dreadful nervous disturbance, not to speak of physical anguish. Even after the foot was apparently well for eight or ten years the slightest misstep gave him great pain."

With quiet and rest the wound began to heal sufficiently for comfort, and country life once more seemed to be a settled thing. With his name, however, ringing upon every lip and his political party triumphant in the State it was not to be expected that "Brierfield" would long hold him in seclusion. Two months of rest and comfort, surrounded by the happy negroes who displayed their pleasure in a hundred ways at having their master and mistress at home again, were all that were allowed them. The broad fields spreading far out around the large old-fashioned house to the verge of the heavy forests which outlined the river, was a pleasant prospect, especially so to the man and woman who had come

of the landed population of the South, a population that loved the soil and drew from it a dignity and sincerity of life that the market places and shops do not readily bestow on their denizenry. They were very happy in its seclusion. Wherever Varina went about the grounds and the gardens the little black children trotted after her. When the master rode by their cabins to the fields they ran out to him, swarming about his horse to receive his affectionate smile and hand clasp. A number of them were children of her grandfather Kempe's negroes who had belonged to the Byrds and Grahams of Prince William County, Virginia.[1] For the most part they were the Davis negroes coming to Jefferson Davis as a portion of his father's estate. He was not wealthy as a slaveholder as that term signified in the South owning in his own right not more than thirty-six slaves, but he commanded enough property to insure him the comforts even many of the elegances of life.[2] His brother Joseph, however, as master of "The Hurricane" in the "Davis Bend" was one of the largest slaveholders of the South. To his brother's property Jefferson Davis had no claim although it has been said that the elder brother was very liberal with the younger when expenses in campaigns ran high.

That master, mistress and slave at "Brierfield" were happy in each others company could not be questioned, neither could the fact that the slave was receiving a care, protection and training not often the lot of the uncivilized. That at this stage of their progress up from savagery their lines had fallen, for the present in pleasant places cannot be disputed. The true historian must admit, however detrimental slavery might become for him at a later stage of development, that

[1] See "A Casket of Reminiscences" by Henry S. Foote.
[2] See Warren County Tax Rolls 1843.

the close contact with the best element of a superior race hastened the negroes civilization immeasurably.

Varina and her husband regarded their slaves with a warm and sincere affection irrespective of any value they might mean to them. They came in daily contact with them and the life at "Brierfield" was as near idylic as any civilization had shown it to be in the history of the world. Varina held the same opinions that her husband did in regard to the institution and often pointed out with confident pride to her friends his burning words upon the subject, in his various discussions of it in the National Congress.

That there were further national honors awaiting him was evident on all sides, but principles, too, unselfish and sincere to ignore prevented him from yielding to the glittering temptation unless he was given the right to maintain his position upon every question of government. It was a day when men were not afraid to express their opinions and these, never *a couvert*, were, perhaps, hurled too fiercely, at times in the face of their opponents. Jefferson Davis was not unlike his day. Like Savonarola he would stand up and deliver himself let what consequences may follow. In this spirit he gave expression to the following clear concept of slavery as it touched the negroes' welfare in his upward progress from savagery to a future state of freedom; and since the subject has been exploited far beyond its due it is given in full: "Let those," he said, "who possess the best opportunity to judge the men who have grown up in the presence of slave institutions, as they exist in the United States, say, if their happiness and usefulness do not prove their present condition to be the accomplishment of an All-wise decree. It may have for its aid the preparation of that race for civil liberty and social enjoyment.

"Compare the slaves in the Southern States with recently imported Africans as seen in the West Indies, and who can fail to be struck with the increased improvement of the race; whether physically, morally, or intellectually considered? Compare our slaves with the free blacks of the Northern States, and you will find the one contented, well provided for in all their physical wants, and steadily improving, in their moral condition; the other miserable, impoverished, loathsome for the deformity and disease which follow after penury and vice, covering the records of the criminal courts, and filling the penitentiaries. Mark the hostility to caste, the social degradation which excludes the able from employment of profit and trust, and leaves the helpless to want and neglect. Then turn to the condition of this race in the States of the South, and view them in the relation of slaves. There, no hostility exists against them—the master is the natural protector of his slave; and public opinion, common feeling, mere interest would not allow him to neglect his wants. Those who urge that the exclusion of slavery from the Territories does not exclude the slaveholder, because he may dispose of his property before emigration, show such inability to comprehend the attachment which generally subsists between a master and his slaves, that I will only offer to them interest as a motive for the care which is extended to those of the sick, and adequate provision to all. Such is the difference between the condition of the free and slave blacks under conditions most favorable to emancipation. Does it warrant the desire on the part of any friend of that dependent race to hasten upon them responsibilities, for which they have shown themselves so unequal? If any shall believe that the sorrow, the suffering, the crime which they witness among the free blacks of the North have resulted

from their degradation by comparison with the white race around them, to such I would answer: Does the condition of St. Domingo, of Jamaica give higher evidence? Or, do the recent atrocities in Martinique encourage better hopes?

"Sir, this problem is one which must bring its own solution. Leave natural causes to their full effect, and when the time shall arrive at which emancipation is proper, those most interested will be most anxious to effect it. But as the obligation is mutual, so must the action be joint; and it is quite within the range of possibility that the masters may desire it when the slaves will object, as was the case when the serfs of Russia refused to be liberated by their landlords.

"Leave the country to the South and West open, and speculation may see in the distant future slavery pressed by a cheaper labor to tropical regions, where less exertion being required to secure a support, their previous preparation will enable them to live in independent communities.

"They must first be separated from the white man, be relieved from the condition of degradation which will always attach to them while in contact with a superior race, and they must be elevated by association and instruction; or, instead of a blessing, liberty would be their greatest curse. Under these considerations, I cannot view the policy proposed to confine them to the present limits of the free States, as having one point, either of humanity or sound policy, to recommend it, or that it can do otherwise than perpetuate slavery even beyond its natural terms in the States where it now exists."[1]

[1] Extract from Speech on The Oregon Question.

CHAPTER XXVII

FROM BRIERFIELD TO THE SENATE

And now the broad fields, well-kept orchards, gardens and flower yards, and the fine horses, fat cattle, herds and fowls of several varieties—all the delights of domestic life which had again engaged the attention of Varina and her husband. must once more be put aside. It seemed a hard fate after all their care and love of it to leave it, but public life—some would say destiny—again claimed him, and with the same uncomplaining spirit,—at least there is neither sign nor record left to prove that it was in any way rebellious, that she had shown on like occasions in the past, Varina prepared to share it with him. Some doubtless may attribute her unmurmuring spirit and ready acquiescence to the sudden changes in their mode of life, to a growing ambition, but putting it at that few women are constantly shifted from one condition to another without complaint of some nature even when they are pleased with the prospect, and Varina had not always been pleased with the circumstance that shaped her life. A high sense of duty, however, was characteristic of her as it generally was of the women of her day. This coupled with the love she bore her husband, which was of a passionate ardor and devotion recalling Victoria's, made any sacrifice easier for her. At that time though normally ambitious she was not more than conscious of it. She was decided on one course, however, cost her what it may, she would never hamper nor restrain him in any career he chose.

To say that she would never be concerned about the difficult paths he took, nor in time come to be familiar enough with him to counsel with him—would not be giving the world a true picture of her. But it would never occur to her to choose the road. That he would always do and she, out of her perfect faith in him, would follow, lead where it may. In her eyes at this time and throughout life, he was "the one perfect being." Her faith in the integrity of his purpose, in his goodness, truth and honesty, was so fixed in her thought that she could not connect wrong with him, whatever price he might have to pay for remaining true to his convictions. In this mood she prepared to follow him in his next public adventure. "Brierfield" had never looked more attractive to her. They still lived in the house built by her husband when he first took possession of the plantation. It was not a beautiful nor a splendid country home in the sense that could be claimed for the homes in the Natchez district, but it was comfortable and in good taste and, though on a lonely plantation beginning to be an island by the tortuous waves of the Mississippi and partaking of its isolation, it was *home* where she could have him to herself and nurse him back to health after his tremendous sacrifice for his country in the West. Besides, it was their own and every tree and shrub and pathway was dear to her foretelling future content and happiness. Too, in the evenings in the library there was constant talk of the new house that they expected to build sometime soon, the planning of which gave them many moments of keenest pleasure. To build a house many times on paper is to have many hours of exquisite happiness, and Varina and her husband were of a period when such pleasures with the well to do were a part of house building.

At the expiration of several months of peace and com-

fort, they were again preparing to leave the Brierfield. Jefferson Davis had received the appointment from Governor Brown of Mississippi[1] to fill the vacancy in the United States Senate caused by the death of Senator Jesse Speight, and they were again packing their trunks to go to the National Capital. The news was in every paper and on every lip. It was what the people had predicted and had asked for. Nor did Varina feel any surprise, believing that he deserved any honor in the people's gift. But it was a sudden change of all her plans, and the thought made her nervous. Still she could value the honor and felt some elation, keen as was her regret at the thought of again leaving "Brierfield." She had known and admired Senator Speight when her husband was in the lower House of Congress and it pleased her to see him follow such a worthy representative of the State to this high office. She had a vivid impression of the Senate and the manner in which its members filled the high office, and even during her short stay at the National Capital discovered the importance of the position.

She would not have been natural had it not gratified her to note the people's enthusiasm over the appointment. While her sweetest joy and content came of the life at "Brierfield" she could still rejoice with her husband in his further promotion. He was now recognized as one of the strongest men in the public life of the State by both Democrats and Whigs. The Howells and their connections, with hundreds of other aristocratic Whig families, had been swept into his party through his marriage, and in both parties he was regarded with much favor. Though a Kentuckian by birth and educated in her schools, and reflecting a certain proud estimate

[1] Albert Gallatin Brown, Democratic Governor of Mississippi, 1844-48.

that she had set upon her individual social progress as a portion of the Union, long seclusion with books and with nature had given him the scholastic mind, and had created in him a certain reserve that removed him from the general class of public men usual to the South at that period.

But for all his aloofness, there was still a personal magnetism about him, and a commanding air and manner that sway men. Had he been a homely man there is some probability that with his reserved manner he would have found himself something less popular. Lincoln might be cited as an example, admiration having not been accorded him in life, and it took death to bring men to a realization of the good in his strange, queer personality. Certainly there was no such response of the people in his re-election to the Presidency during the war for Southern Independence as was given Jefferson Davis. If men must command, their fellows want them to appear capable of doing so, and physical grace when coupled with mental power and ability makes it easier for men to gather about them a following that leads to hero worship. Jefferson Davis possessed all the qualities of leadership but the one of demagoguery which, while it is the most despicable, is for the time being one of the most powerful in the possession of public men. This he did not possess; even the excessive forms of diplomacy being obnoxious to him, and there came times in his life when the lack of it affected his relations with others more than he dreamed. He was not of a suspicious nature and, though in the main a good judge of men, sometimes put more faith in some than the circumstances seemed to warrant. His confidence in men was based on the belief that they possessed the same degree of honesty and sincerity of purpose as he himself did. Still, he had more than average penetration and once disillusioned was

rarely reconciled. In such instances there was apt to be in his demeanor a contemptuousness that stung his victim. To the young wife who believed him faultless his contempt of the ignoble and false was one of his chief charms.

Jefferson Davis was not in robust health at this period of his life, and Victoria was never more concerned and anxious over Albert's health than the happy American woman was over that of her husband, nor took herself more seriously as a wife. Her own health had not been good but that mattered not so much in comparison with his. Women of her day gave themselves largely to their menfolk and Varina possessed a strong generous nature when it came to a question of any whom she loved. Her love, solicitude and sacrifice for him were of anomalous proportions, one might say unhealthy if it had not manifested itself in such an easy and natural manner and remained so permanent. Many have wondered at the ardor and zest of it through a long life of devastated hopes and fiery trials. Victoria's was not tested to the bitter end. Albert never grew old in her company, was never subjected to any such stripping of all that was great and illustrious as was the man who now seemed little less than a god to the woman walking so proudly and confidently at his side.

Their journey to Washington took them over a route now more familiar to their eyes, and many incidents of their former trips were revived much to their amusement. They were thoroughly happy and their own personal interests claimed a large share of their thought.

Though far from well, pale and thin and still on crutches, Jefferson Davis was very distinguished looking when he took his seat for his first term in the august body to which every State dignitary throughout the Union aspired. He became

a figure at this first session of the Thirtieth Congress to the public eye, from which it could not easily turn away. Varina's pride in him at this time is seen in her chronicles of him in late life. "Perhaps no legislative body," she wrote, "was ever more suspiciously regardful of its own dignity or more coldly punctilious in its discipline of new and untried members than the Senate of the United States fifty years ago. Yet its welcome to the young Senator from Mississippi was most cordial and unreserved."[1] "Nor was it strange," she continues with no tint of the glamour faded with the years, "the gossip which flies constantly between the two halls of Congress had whispered of his brilliant career in the House while a member of the Twenty-ninth Congress. And something more than congressional gossip—the voice of an admiring people had reached grave Senators that across the border American valor had once more been made memorable, and that their new associate had been its inspirer."

It was their first real taste of National life and it was during these years that Varina was living for the most part for her husband. Still she herself was constantly developing latent powers. No children, to her secret sorrow and anxiety, had been born to them, and this was somewhat of a mortification to her, as all women of her day were expected to present their husbands with sons and daughters. But this denied her, the rich devotion of her nature was centered upon the man for whom her love held as deep romantic fervor as has ever been known to history. Still, with all this absorbing interest in him, affection for her family had not become a whit less warm and interested. She kept them about her constantly: had brought her young brother Beckett to Washington with her to place him in

[1] *A Memoir*, Vol. I.

school at Alexandria, Virginia. Her young sister Maggie was constantly with her. Jefferson Davis was never averse to having her relatives with them. On the contrary he derived great pleasure from their presence in his home—the home that Varina managed without any apparent worry or exertion. Of her many gifts it should be recorded of her that she possessed a talent that amounted to genius for making things run smoothly in the home. Her judgment was good as to the essential and worth while, and trivial details of a disturbing nature were generally ignored. There was sure to be comfort for every one in the home wherever they gathered, whether in a suite, or rented house in the National Capital, or at "Brierfield."[1] She continued to have a decided taste for housekeeping, but she could easily disassociate herself from it on any demand from her husband. That the main interest of her life was centered in him was recognized by all. Nor was she alone in her excessive admiration of him. If she regarded him as a superior being, her family did near, the same thing, and there was always a pleasant home atmosphere awaiting him after his day's tasks. Biographers who see in her life some similarity to that of Mrs. Abraham Lincoln certainly base it upon a few parallel circumstances that hedged both lives.[2] Their domestic environment was wholly unlike. Varina's marital relations had always been of the happiest nature—the companionableness between herself and her husband was marked, an atmosphere in which she flowered out unconsciously into a rich individual type, self-confident, responsive and receptive. While Mrs. Lincoln possessing a touchy and somewhat bleak nature, as worthy as she was in most respects, baffled by an inability to understand and appreciate the good in the man with whom

[1] Conversations with descendants of contemporaries.
[2] "Wives" by Gamaliel Bradford.

she had cast her lot, never developed the color and warmth that go to make beauty and happiness in human relations. Varina had succeeded better in closing her eyes to any peculiarities in men's natures. She may have been a good fencer but she would never have broken through all the rules of the game.

CHAPTER XXVIII

A SENATOR'S WIFE

Of Jefferson Davis' service in Congress, which numerous authors have commended, there is not so much need to write in detail in this volume. In order, however, to preserve the continuity of the circumstance that was slowly shaping the wife's future, some of the vital questions and movements in which he took a prominent and leading part as early as 1847 will be briefly summarized. No sooner than the session of Congress had opened and proceeded with legislation, he was appointed on the important Committee of Military Affairs and Pensions. Soon discovering his cultural tastes he was named by President Polk as one of the Regents of the Smithsonian Institution in which he continued to take a deep interest throughout his services in the National Capital. As a member of the Library Committee he was invaluable, advocating with great earnestness all such cultural movements as the Vattemare's international exchange of literature. In discussing all measures relating to the Mexican War and Mexico, he came in close contact with such debaters as Daniel Webster and bore himself with ease, displaying a profound knowledge and erudition concerning the subject that astonished his fellow members. In the matter of the bill to repair and improve the dam at the head of Cumberland Island, his strict construction of the Constitution began to show itself, as opposed to any form of centralized power so staunchly upheld by the old Federal party,

and now embraced in some of its provisions by the Whig party. On all party questions he was in thorough accord with Calhoun, his mentor and guide. Whenever a slight difference of opinion arose between himself and the South Carolina Statesman it was merely of a technical nature. The two were especially together in all questions relating to States' Rights as provided for in the Constitution. These could well have been named the leading Constitutionalists of the Thirtieth Congress.[1]

It was not, however, until the spring of 1848 that the Senate became the arena where the Constitution was to be ultimately torn into shreds. Not yet, did the discussions do more than strengthen party differences and opinions. The New England States which had themselves set up the institution of slavery along with Virginia and the other Colonial provinces had, in their territory, abolished it, though her ships and wealthy tradesmen still carried on the importation of slaves and continued to amass great fortunes in the slave trade. It was an anomalous condition of which their legislatures long remained in ignorance or seemingly so. Led at first by local sentiment in these states, like all reforms that begin in social circles, it found its way into politics as the surest means its advocates knew of accomplishing their purpose. Politicians whether individually favoring the abolition of slavery or not were soon, by the pressure brought to bear upon them, swept into the ranks of the reformers as a matter of self interest in obtaining office. A close study even of Lincoln's political policies reveals the fact that he himself thought little of the question until he realized that it was made an issue by his party. Hale of New Hampshire had

[1] *A Memoir*, Vol. I. Jefferson Davis, Letters, Papers and Speeches, in ten Vols. Dunbar Rowland. Jefferson Davis Vol I William E. Dodd.

apparently received his instruction along this line from the local reformers who were now determined to thrust the anti-slavery issue to the fore. These did not count the cost in seeking their ends, nor make but one request—that their plea be granted. The Abolition party had already set up an organ in the National Capital there to do business through the *National Era.* Friction of some serious nature at once begun on the part of the citizens of the District and the owners of the *Era,* and the Hale bill was framed to punish what it termed the rioting and law-breaking in the District of Columbia. The District was still slave territory, and while the property guaranteed to them through the Constitution was under question, the bill sought to protect the *Era.* It ignored the fact that seventy negroes belonging to the citizens of Washington had been mysteriously captured by non-residents, men whose fathers had themselves owned slaves, and had got rid of them in a legal and peaceful manner.

The strict Constitutionalists were aroused. The Abolitionists had now brought their reform to the very door of the Capitol. The Constitution under which compact the States had entered into a Union recognized slaves as property and as a domestic institution under the control of the States where it existed. Could Congress assume jurisdiction over the institution? Was the Constitution a scrap of paper? Did it mean something or nothing? If disregarded in one particular, would it be respected in others? Calhoun had spent his entire public service in its defense. He was growing old and his voice had lost something of its convincing appeal. In Jefferson Davis, even this early, many were discerning a worthy successor.

Varina liked excitement at times and enjoyed seeing her

husband pitting his strength against the ablest men of the Nation, and she was always in her place to watch the proceedings, listening eagerly and intelligently to all debates. She made a pleasing appearance in the throng, tastefully gowned, in handsome black silk of which she was very fond and carrying herself with an air of distinction. The perfect accord between herself and husband was noticeable and much favorable comment of friends and acquaintances added to the happiness of both. That she was a close student at that time of all governmental questions is clearly shown in her *Memoir,* portions of which are preserved in the original manuscript.[1] To herself she refers all too infrequently. Still from the lively description she gives of persons and events of that day one can readily see that she was always in constant and intimate contact with every phase of both the public and social life about her. Her taste for public life, too, was growing. She had begun to show more personality, to dress more expensively, and to enlarge her social activities, though she still preferred her husband's society and their quiet fireside when the day was spent. They read together constantly in the evening, she says, and discussed governmental principles as expressed by the calm Jefferson and combatted by the nimble Hamilton, also discussed the ability, weaknesses, and foibles of the present leaders, from which they derived the keenest enjoyment. She continued to take pleasure in helping with his correspondence and in listening to the notes that he made for certain speeches. This gave her the best opportunity for studying conditions, and the views of the various distinguished leaders in the political movements of the time. If some of

[1] Original manuscript pages of *Jefferson Davis, A Memoir by His Wife,* preserved in the Mississippi Historical Society.

her own phrases crept into the letters that he dictated to her, it was indulged with a smile in view of the pride and interest she took in the assistance she rendered him. Besides, few in all that vast assembly of varying intellects culled from the centers of culture throughout the entire Union were any better prepared to write good letters than was she.

Her learned New England tutor had not performed his task carelessly during the twelve years that he drilled her in the classics. His Latin was hers, and she had followed him far into realms of the best literature. Since her marriage her cultural development had continued under the direction of her husband who himself always engaged in an extensive course of reading, many of the classics being reviewed by him in the original. Varina herself was a ravenous reader, still her mental powers were not yet specifically directed; nor had she as yet developed to any great extent ambitions of a public nature. Her ambition still held much in it of the nature of her section. To be well-dressed, pointed out as the handsome young wife of Jefferson Davis, and to be pleasant, clever, and witty as a dinner guest, hostess or caller—these were at the present the mainsprings of her aspirations. Gentlemen, especially those of a cultured type, enjoyed her society. There was a coarse type among men, however, that she says was repellant to her. Her natural bonhomie and zest for enjoyment made her very agreeable to women, a few of whom pronounced her self-assertive, but at the same time were fond of her society and anxious enough to be found in her company. There were many diversions and women flocked together much in the same manner as they do today. The religious spirit of the Capital City, though pronounced —as it was throughout America, was hardly as personal as that she had breathed as a child. Still there was in her

worship and devotion, a piety less pretentious than much she came in contact with in the conglomerate society about her. The "religious" type, who amid much observance and self-commendation sets method above the things of the spirit, does not describe her. Her laughter, her charity, her compassion, came too frequently for that, and, somewhat to the confusion of the religious self-exploiter, especially when such were addicted to sanctimony and cant, she sometimes gave way to a keen sense of the ridiculous and at such times she was accused of a spirit of both levity and satire. Usually tolerant of the ignorant, especially if these were of humble origin, with those whose ignorance was further made patent by a strong display of presumption or assumption she was sometimes not as considerate as some have thought she should have been. She was also accused sometimes of being untactful. But while known to be agreeable it was a marked trait of her character that she would never carry tact to the point of insincerity. Often she could have escaped differences by sauve concessions made with ulterior motives and at the expense of right. This she could never bring herself to do, and she sometimes struck hard at the insincerities about her. In the best sense of the word, however, she was tactful, her letters abounding with evidence of the best sort of tact in her relations with her husband and intimate friends; and by her mother's family she was regarded as one to be turned to in any crisis.[1] People without true consideration of others never hold such relations in their family circle. Many women who have won reputation in social circles for great tactfulness have been known to be brutally frank at home. Again, Varina never seemed to have had any marital difficulties. Her tact here was supreme.

[1] Conversations with descendants of contemporaries.

Her critics who have accused her of moments both of satire and levity have recorded two stories of her that are too good to be lost: One was that she on one occasion laughed rather immoderately at a certain woman of whom a male relative said, "Oh well if she gets any pleasure out of her church work—let her do it—for heaven knows she gets none out of what she does at home." The other story runs that she could not suppress a merry peal at a good lady during the Southern Revolution who when sewing for the soldiers made every trouser leg to fit the left leg. If this must be recorded against her it should also be recorded that she enjoyed her laughter and rarely if ever laughed with her lips.

She enjoyed her husband's first term in the Senate. It was all deeply interesting to her, but hardly the life that she had thought to lead. Would it in the end become the one she preferred, even craved? So far it seems that it had not, since she told friends at home that at this time in Washington they frequently during the evenings drew plans for the new house they expected to build on the Brierfield plantation.[1]

It was of the period of the Thirtieth Congress, in the spring of 1848 that she gives us some delightful glimpses of life in Senatorial circles which fully indicate that she was developing an ability to gauge that of those about her.

"We lived," she wrote, "in the house next door to the United States Hotel, and went in to our meals across a little bridge that communicated with the dining-room. Governor McWillie, of Mississippi, and his family, Mr. and Mrs. Toombs, of Georgia, and Mr. and Mrs. Burt, of South Carolina, made up our mess. Mrs. Burt was the niece of Mr. Calhoun and a very handsome and amiable woman. Her

[1] Conversations with descendants of contemporaries.

husband was a strong-hearted, faithful, honest man who agreed with Calhoun in most things. We did not know his full worth then, and mistook him for simply an elegant man, formed to adorn society; but when he was tried by the fires of adversity, the metal that was in him shone without a grain of alloy.

"Mr. and Mrs. Toombs were both comparatively young, and one could scarcely imagine a wittier and more agreeable companion than he was. He was a university man, and had kept up his classics. He had the personal habits of a fine gentleman. His diction was good, his wit keen, and his audacity made him equal to anything in the heat of the debate. He loved Alexander H. Stephens with a tenderness that was almost pathetic, and was as much beloved by him. They were very sharply contrasted personally. Mr. Toombs was over six feet tall, with broad shoulders; his fine head set well on his shoulders, was covered with long, glossy black hair, which when speaking, he managed to toss about so as to recall the memory of Danton. His coloring was good, and his teeth brilliantly white, but his mouth was somewhat pendulous and subtracted from the rest of the strong face. His eyes were magnificent, dark and flashing, and they had a certain lawless way of ranging about that was indicative of his character. His hands were beautiful and kept like those of a fashionable woman. His voice was like a trumpet, but without sweetness, and his enunciation was thick.

"Mr. Stevens was not small, but he looked so, from the shortness of his body. His head was unshapely and immature. His arms were disproportionately long, and his beardless, wrinkled face gave him the look of one born out of season. His eyes were clear hazel, and had a fine critical,

deliberate expression that commanded attention. His voice was thin, and piercing like a woman's, but there the resemblance ended. His was a virile mind sustained by a inflexible will; and, in all matters of importance, Mr. Toombs came up, in the end, on Mr. Stephens' side.

"Mr. Stephens studied only legal and governmental books, but Mr. Toombs loved books of the imagination, travels, anything that would help him (as the English ambassador said of him once) 'to utter some of his brilliant paradoxes.' During the time of the highest excitement over the compromise measures, when Mr. Toombs was on his feet some twenty times a day, he arose at daylight, took French lessons with his daughters, and became a good French scholar so far as reading the language went. He would sit with his hands full of the reporter's notes on his speeches for correction, with 'Le Medecin malgre lui' in the other hand, roaring over the play.

"I once said to him, 'I do not see how you can enjoy that so much.'

"He answered, 'Whatever the Lord Almighty lets his geniuses create, He makes someone to enjoy; these plays take all the soreness out of me.'

"Mr. Davis and he were never congenial in their tastes; their habits and their manners were entirely diverse; but we all went on amiably enough, as he was very fond of Mrs. Toombs, who was a pleasant, kindly woman, and cheerful like her husband."[1]

[1] A *Memoir,* Vol. I.

CHAPTER XXIX

CUBAN INCIDENT

SOCIAL LIFE OF THE THIRTIETH CONGRESS

THE country for some time had been filled with rumors of Cuban resistance of Spanish authority, and numerous prominent men of the United States, especially those who had been connected with the army, and had won distinction in the war with Mexico, were constantly being sought to interpose in behalf of the liberties of the long suffering island. Among these were Jefferson Davis, Robert E. Lee and John A. Quitman, all of whom had served with distinction in Mexico. On learning that her husband had been solicited by General Lopez, and other prominent Cubans, to take charge of an expedition to liberate the Island from the dominance of Spain Varina grew very much alarmed. Although naturally patriotic, and sympathetic enough with the oppressed people whose wrongs she had heard denounced in and about Natchez since early childhood, she still had the Mexican war in mind and her husband's terrible wound which had not yet healed. The mere thought "terrified her," she later told a friend at Natchez. "It was the first time that I had ever felt that I might become hysterical." She often said of herself, with a glow of admiration lighting up her soft dark eyes, that she was not naturally as self-sacrificial as her husband.

They were still in Washington. Their Congressional "Mess" had broken up she says for the summer, and having decided not to go South, they had remained, and continued to

occupy the same house. It was pleasant and well furnished with a handsome drawing-room and other luxuries and conveniences usual to the best houses of that day. Varina had made it very attractive with an eye at the same time for comfort following the local custom of turning off the lights which were supposed to heat the rooms during the first hours of the evening, leaving "the moonlight," she says, "for illumination."

Though many of their friends and acquaintances had left the city with the approach of summer, they still had their circle and entertained numerous distinguished visitors and callers who came to the city for conferences of a varied nature with the brilliant young democratic senator, whose views, "imperialistic" some have thought in the matter of his country's expansion, embraced questions world wide in significance. For all such, according to their Southern custom, they kept open house, and the home soon became known as a hospitable one, where people were made to feel at ease, an atmosphere that their New England friends, also, found delightful and often remarked upon. People always spoke of them as "charming Southern people" their responsive natures drawing to them many of the most brilliant minds of the day.

It was on one of the summer evenings described with the lights turned off and the drawing-room flooded with moonlight that Varina coming into the room found strangers—even more than strangers—foreigners—"a light haired man sitting very still beside one whose glowing eyes and silvery hair made points of light in the room." The stranger was the ill fated patriot General Lopez who had come with a countryman to ask assistance in a swift movement for the liberation of his beloved Island. For long hours he interceded with the hero of Buena Vista and Monteray in behalf

of the independence of his oppressed country, offering large sums for the maintenance of his family while he was engaged in the march. The appeal did not fail to touch Jefferson Davis, and he felt that this was an opportunity for some Lafayette to rise in defense of a long suffering people. Feel about the matter, however, as he might he was highly sensitive to the requirements of any obligation he had assumed. It was inconsistent with his duty as an official in the civil service of his country to accept the offer. Still, while his duty forced him to decline the service one can believe that had he been free of any official obligation he would have expressed some active sympathy for the oppressed Island. As it was he was ready to advise with the representative of the expedition with as fearless and salient purpose as ever distinguished Roosevelt in later years. He thought of one in whom he had implicit faith to lead the expedition and suggested that Lopez should interview him immediately. But this too was to be denied the unhappy Lopez since Major Robert E. Lee too thought that it was inconsistent with his obligation to the United States Government to accept the position, as much as he sympathized with the oppressed people. A short while later Major Lee called at the home of Jefferson Davis to discuss the matter, and give the reason for his not assisting General Lopez in the expedition. Varina describes him as one of the "handsomest men" she had ever met, and as the visit was not one purely of an official nature she "remained in the drawing-room."

Thus, for the first time the three were brought together who were to be associated so closely in the future. The long nineteenth century drawing-room decorated as was her custom with several stately plants and flooded with a soft light showed all three faces—powerful, purposeful, beautiful—

such faces as the old gods were wont to pick for high adventure, faces already prefigured on the future pages of American history.

Varina was greatly relieved that her husband had declined the proposition, to be shocked and grieved on hearing a month later that General Lopez with several young men from the best families of Natchez who had joined the expedition had been suddenly arrested, strapped in a garrote chair and executed by the Spanish authorities. Among these was Clement Stanford an exceedingly daring and bright young man of Natchez and an enthusiast for liberty. Others as heroic lost their lives in service to the Island.

The recent episode of a struggle on the part of Cuba to secure her independence caused much excitement in both political and social circles and was condemned or condoned according to which political party viewed it. The views of the expansionist leaders of the Democratic party went so far as to embrace the dismemberment of Mexico, the control of Panama, and the annexation of Yucatan, and a plank in their platform provided for any expansion of territory wherever it affected the security of the United States. Everything that in any wise related to assistance to the Island was defended by that party; even the imprisonment of William Walker for a foray upon Nicaragua was deemed unjust. That the Pearl of the Antilles was coveted for a treasured addition to the United States can not be doubted—freedom at least for the Island was clearly and openly desired. General Quitman had made a brilliant effort in behalf of its liberty and Spanish authorities were already on guard narrowly watching his movements.

Jefferson Davis was in accord with his party in the matter of expansion wherever it concerned the safety of his country,

and Buchanan was outspoken in his message to Congress for an immediate appropriation for the purchase of the Island.

After the disquieting Cuban incident had passed life moved along very pleasantly for Varina during the remainder of their stay in the city. Though more given to social diversion than her husband, who made everything subordinate to the one great aim of acceptable public service, relying on no social influence or other extraneous support in shaping his course, on account of his delicate health she assumed few social duties and kept within her own circle to a great extent. They continued for the most part to spend their evenings together, she supremely—Pollard would have said "inordinately happy" to be near him. At times she assisted him while he read the proof of his speeches, warm imperialistic documents savoring still of the youthful fervor that is rarely as thoroughly seasoned with sober reflection as at a later period of life—speeches breathing of the expansion of his country's boundaries wherever it increased its greater power and security. Or else they answered his numerous correspondents—constituents in the main, for it was a day of much political discussion and constituents demanded to be set right on the slightest point. When not reading proof with him or writing out neat long-hand letters from his dictation she lingered near with some light embroidery—women at that day were expected when at home to have a filmy piece of fancy work in their hands, and she was really fond of all such small domesticities—while he labored over the details of his official duties. "And many," she says "were the jests and anecdotes he interspersed for my amusement throughout the otherwise dull work." Still, with all their devotion to what each felt was of first importance, people so well-fitted as were they for social intercourse were certain

to be sought, and Varina was more amused and entertained by it than her husband, though he at times enjoyed it. While they had not as yet felt society's imperious demand they sometimes accepted invitations from various high officials in whose salons politics among other things, was discussed, though a little gingerly at that day by women. Literature was a constant theme and received the same captious or favorable criticism, though from a far different standpoint in that prim age, that it does today. Sandwiched between the heavy pages of her *Memoir* one gets a bright glimpse of this period's view of various books and their authors, all of which indicates America's keen appreciation of Victorian manners and tastes.

"In those days," she wrote, "when mammas considered the 'Pickwick Papers' too coarse for their daughters' perusal; when 'Don Juan' was forbidden on pain of excommunication from the guild of delicate-minded women; when 'Devereux' and 'The Disowned' were placed behind the other books on the shelves of the library, as unfit for the eyes of ladies; when George Sand and Paul de Kock were named with bated breath, and the young people knew them not; when Miss Austen's correct ladies and gentlemen walked serenely across the literary stage and looked their approval of their equally prudent audience; when Lady Delacour's duel with Harriet Freke was considered an incident to be deprecated while reading Miss Edgeworth's novels, and 'Lady Audley's Secret' was held in reserve and not to be confided lightly to the young; when we still argued hotly over the relative merits of Di. Vernon and Belinda; when some old-fashioned girls wept over 'Thaddeus of Warsaw,' and there were even some who yet gazed lovingly at Amanda Fitz-Allen's tearful fainting form as it was borne off from

Lord Mortimer—Frederika Bremer's 'Neighbors' gave us our first glimpse of Swedish every-day life. Petræa's nose was a matter of wide-spread sympathy, and we laughed over the Bersekers like her Swedish compatriots. 'The President's Daughters,' too, were household friends, and Miss Bremer's coming to the United States on a tour of pleasure was hailed as a boon in store for those who loved her, for the joy she gave.

"In the summer of 1848 Miss Bremer came to Washington on her way to South Carolina and the Southwest, and Mrs. Seaton, at whose hospitable, graceful home most of the notable people who visited the capital were charmingly entertained, invited Mr. Davis and me to meet her. He told me in confidence that he had not read much in Miss Bremer's books, and only remembered some girl's trouble about her nose, 'which, as she was ugly, did not concern me.' However, I was full of the happy anticipation of seeing the authoress of my favorite books. One very hot summer evening, when the moon was nearly full, we went to Mr. Seaton's large old-fashioned house on C Street, to a high tea.

"When we entered, besides several agreeable men, Mrs. Webster, Mrs. Gales, Commodore Stockton, Mr. and Mrs. John Davis, of Massachusetts, and Senator Green, of Rhode Island, with his grey-haired, charming wife, were present.

"Then and there ceased my desire to look with the naked eye upon the authors and authoresses 'that warn, comfort, and command' us in our journey through the world. Miss Bremer was not more than five feet high, her nose was all Petræa had unavailingly tried to suppress, and red as a damask rose, of which color her face had also partaken; her eyes were pale blue, and not large. On her head, concealing all but a few strands of dark hair, was a wondrous cap with

aspiring bows of purple ribbon amidst a chevaux-de-frise of white lace. On her person was a large round lace cape, then called a cardinal, which covered her from throat to feet, and was lined also with purple silk. We were all presented with due ceremony, and she was debonnaire, but rather a 'mute inglorious' great one, as her English was deficient. After tea we adjourned to the gallery at the back of the house, over-looking an old-fashioned garden where 'roses and lillies and daffadowndillies' disputed the ground with fine fruit-trees, but dwelt more peacefully with them than the useful and ornamental members of a community generally do. Just as we were comfortably seated in the silvery moonlight, a party of congenial women together, for the gentlemen had gone into the garden for a cozy smoke, Mr. Webster joined us in evening costume, or what was regarded then as such. He was rather inclined to be ornate in his dress, his usual afternoon costume being a blue coat with large brass buttons, with either a pair of nankeen trousers, or white linen. On this occasion they were white, and with his white expanse of waistcoat made him appear unusually large.

"He was just from a dinner party at another friend's house, and was much more stately and inclined to conversation than was habitual with him. After being introduced to Miss Bremer and exchanging a few words with the other ladies, he stood before her, erect and oratorical, and in his senatorial voice, pitched for the ears of the multitude, said, 'Madam, you have toiling millions, we have boundless area.' Miss Bremer looked deferentially up in his face and, gently interrupting him, said, 'Y-e-s, very moch.' Mr. Webster sighed and sat down silently, and in a few minutes Mr. Davis came and took him off to the smokers, where they kept him for an hour or more.

"In the meanwhile, we spoke of Swedish music, and Mrs. Seaton begged Miss Bremer to play some of the popular airs for us. She consented and we went to the drawing-room to hear her. While Miss Bremer was forging ahead at a waltz, Mr. Webster entered, and not looking to see who was playing, spoke from the middle of the room to his wife: 'My dear, we will say good-night; whenever a young lady is asked to play on an occasion like this, it is time for us old people to be going home.'

"Mrs. Webster, with a dismayed *'Dear me!'* arose, and they made their adieux."

At intervals from Varina's *Memoirs* we get these delightful glimpses of her close and early contact with the fashionable and erudite society of America and when one contemplates how early and how long she made a part of it it is small wonder that both she and her husband were thoroughly grounded in the best social usages of the day. Their critics most of whom were provincials seem to have overlooked this fact.

CHAPTER XXX

THE FIRST CRISIS

The proceedings of the Thirty-first Congress were filled with the discussions of issues and questions of vital importance to the country's continued welfare, all of which had been brought before both branches in constant and unrestrained debate. Throughout all Jefferson Davis bore a conspicuous part. His amendment to the Oregon bill was the occasion of a great speech—his greatest so far—in which he attracted the favorable attention of the members of the entire body whether Whig or Democrat.

The question as to whether slavery should be allowed in the new territory was beginning to be a bitter issue and Southern leaders were looking to some definite control of the far West. The views of the Abolitionist were silently but hourly being injected into politics and political representatives were no longer free to disregard the pressure that was being brought to bear upon them from that source. In the admission of the new States in the Union opposed to her institutions the South saw her rights invaded and her majority jeopardized in national legislation. She had ruled the country very near since its creation and was now determined not to lose her prestige in its councils, especially since she had the Constitution on her side. Southern legislative assemblies denounced all movements looking to the exclusion of slavery from the new territory as direct violations of the Constitution. At the same time some Northern

legislatures had endorsed the Wilmot Proviso. Clay's Compromise measure was proposed and violently discussed to finally pass. In the Senate the conflict raged with unabated heat and stubbornness during the Thirty-First Congress around the question of States' Rights bringing on Seward's speech with meanings and motives kept under cover as many soon discovered. Jefferson Davis answered with a powerful reply and had sustained himself in debate with such intellects as Webster and Clay. Death during these years had claimed the great Calhoun and his mantle had fallen on Jefferson Davis—the champion of the Constitution and the rights and privileges it conferred. He was Calhoun's pupil and follower, and now that the rockribbed champion of States' Rights had passed away he had not been slow to accept leadership, winning even the great Webster's undisguised admiration. To the chagrin of thousands of his constituents the New England giant was no partisan when it came to Constitutional interpretation. His efforts were actuated by a wide spread love of the Union but suspicioning his position his party laid it up against him for future rebuke. He understood what the fervid Southern Senators were contending for—the necessity of keeping the sacred compact intact as a means of preserving the Union, and on the eve of the great leader's death had made his famous compromise speech in behalf of the preservation of the Union. In its opening passage he sounded a note of warning which was applauded by Southern Senators throughout. In eloquent words, characteristic of the orators of that day he pleaded in tense fearless voice: "Mr. President, I wish to speak today not as a Northern man, but as an American, a member of the Senate of the United States. It is fortunate that there is a Senate of the United States; a body not yet

moved from its propriety, not yet lost to the just sense of its own dignity and its own high responsibilities; and a body to which the country looks with confidence for wise, moderate, patriotic, and healing counsels. It is not to be denied that we live in the midst of strong agitations, and are surrounded by very considerable dangers to our institutions and Government. The imprisoned winds are let loose. The East, the West, the North, and the stormy South, all combine to throw the whole ocean into commotion, to toss its billows to the skies, and to disclose its profound depths. I do not affect to regard myself, Mr. President, as holding, or as fit to hold, the helm in this combat of the social elements; but I have a duty to perform, and I mean to perform it with fidelity—not without a sense of surrounding dangers, but not without hope. I have a part to act, not for my own security or safety, for I am looking out for no fragment upon which to float away from the wreck, if wreck there must be; but for the good of the whole; and there is that which will keep me to my duty during this struggle, whether the sun and the stars shall appear or not appear, for many days, I speak today for the preservation of the Union. 'Hear me for my cause.' " Describing the occasion of the speech Varina wrote: "The Senate, before the morning hour, was crowded from the gallery to the floor; outside of the railing was a parterre of brilliant palpitating color, a solid phalanx of ladies; on the steps of the Vice-President's seat every available inch was occupied, and even between the senators, seated on the floor, the rosy faces and waving plumes of ladies made points of color against the senators' black garments. The ladies kept still as mice, feeling themselves present there on sufferance; and, besides, their interest was intense."

That in all the vast assembly few spectators men or women

were more interested in what was going on than Varina herself can be easily imagined. In a proud, though vaguely defined and unconscious way she felt that her husband so close a follower of the celebrated Calhoun was to a great extent the recipient of much of the trust and confidence that was entertained for that distinguished leader. That he was now claiming the respect, even admiration of the entire personnel of Congress in both branches, was clear to all. In both husband and wife were soon recognized a degree of culture not found in the rank and file of the erudite Senatorial body. It spoke well for them that they had drawn around them the representatives of the best society of the nation's official circles. In a small way she entertained and her drawing-room, not as elaborate as it was destined to become, was the scene of a hospitality, characterized for its fine and easy grace where the best minds and intellects of official circles found relaxation, and as women Victoria's light would have paled beside Varina's.

In the bitter controversy that daily grew more serious and complicated the spirit of compromise seemed far off. Numberless small incidents as the resolution commended by Seward to permit the Irish Temperance orator Matthew to sit in the box of the Senate were straws that showed the direction of the wind. The various attempts, some genuine some artificial, at solution served only as a means for bringing about internal dissension between the Southern Democracy and the old Whig element in some States of the South. This element later revived its opposition to Calhoun and every political ideal for which he had contended to the point of even impugning to him unworthy motives. While the irreconcilable conflict was burying its deep roots into the Nation's life, local controversies vexed various Southern

States. When Congress adjourned Jefferson Davis, in the hope of allaying all local dissensions and frictions—returned home that he might meet the Whig element of the State in debate. They left Washington for Jackson, Mississippi where, before going to "Brierfield," they spent a week or more the guests of the city. They were popular in the social life of the State as much so as in political circles and both husband and wife were lavishly entertained. Varina had had a full draught of Washington life, but, while she had drunk of it avidly enough she had not lost her taste for the Brierfield home. It still held a fascination for her. Still she had acquired some notable distinction in the social and literary circles of the Capital and, as a young and happily married woman, wholly devoted to her husband, she was willing even eager to make any sacrifice that in any way advanced his public interests. Wherever her husband must necessarily be Varina could be happy, and it was still with no great wrench that she tore herself away from the allurements and excitements of the National Capital. It seems that there was no other motive but the one of wifely love and devotion so natural to the women of her day, and not merely one of obedience that made her willing to accept the many changes that was being demanded of her. She had herself developed in the atmosphere in which she daily lived and was now able to grasp for herself the meaning and purport of governmental principles and of high position as well. And having imbibed her husband's political policies and views she was now as eager for the downfall of the Whigs as she had ever been for their triumph before her marriage. She was soon to have a taste of their persistency.

The Democracy of the State, fearing the return of the Whigs to power after General Quitman's withdrawal from

the candidacy in the gubernatorial contest, in their extremity appealed to Jefferson Davis to take his place in a movement to save the party and he resigned his seat in the Senate and became the candidate of his party for governor. Varina once more overcame her desire to settle down in the quiet country life and gave her time wholly to secretarial work. Each day and far into the night she labored with him in the interest of his canvass. The canvass proved to be a strenuous undertaking and the bad start that the Democrats had got under Quitman could not be overcome in the six weeks that followed. Still, though the opposition was buoyed up by a contribution from Democratic ranks, it was reduced to less than a thousand.

Free once more to follow their own inclinations Varina and her husband turned their attention again to plantation life, this time to enjoy it for a longer period than ever before, their stay at "Brierfield" having always been brief. While she did not care especially for the honor it was her husband's first public defeat and the boasts of the victorious party stung her to the quick. If she was not a good loser few were given the pleasure of witnessing it; these few however have said that she was "terribly upset" for several weeks over the turn affairs had taken but that she soon recovered from her disappointment.[1] Her husband's health had been far from good during the summer months and with that to think of and the home to claim her attention she was soon immersed in private affairs. Although the opposition had triumphed the political influence and social prestige of the master and mistress of "Brierfield" were widespread throughout the State, and wherever they appeared they were singled out for special attention. At Natchez and Vicksburg large social

[1] Conversations with descendents of contemporaries.

affairs were constantly being arranged for their entertainment and political friends constantly crowded about them. The Democrats, nettled at the Whig victory, never for a moment let the people forget that the State Legislature had endorsed Jefferson Davis' position on the Clay Compromise measure while it condemned and criticized severely that of Governor Foote. The latter, however, had a strong hold at various times upon the people of the State.

CHAPTER XXXI

FROM BRIERFIELD TO THE CABINET

After the political victory of the Whigs—the last the party ever claimed as a party in the State, although a prominent Democrat carried its banner and swept his following into its ranks, Varina and her husband took up once more and for a more extended period than at any time previously the care of their plantation home. It was still a pleasant prospect to them and held advantages from an economic and financial standpoint not to be estimated lightly. The wife was rather more thrifty than her husband with a marked bent for industry, not so much for mere love of accumulating as for an outlet for excessive energy and an instinct for order and system. She was a good spender with all her thrift when it came to things she really wanted, though never careless in her spending. It was always said of her that where others purchased two dresses she purchased one, the one costing sometimes something more than the two procured by her friend. "I never saw her that she was not prettily dressed" the people at Natchez often said of her. Even in a "neat morning dress" with a rose in her hair she was "simply charming." Some have, also said that "she could always do more with five dollars than some women could with ten." Other small comment of the day indicated her natural taste for the simplicities, but at the same time her liking for certain elegances of living.[1]

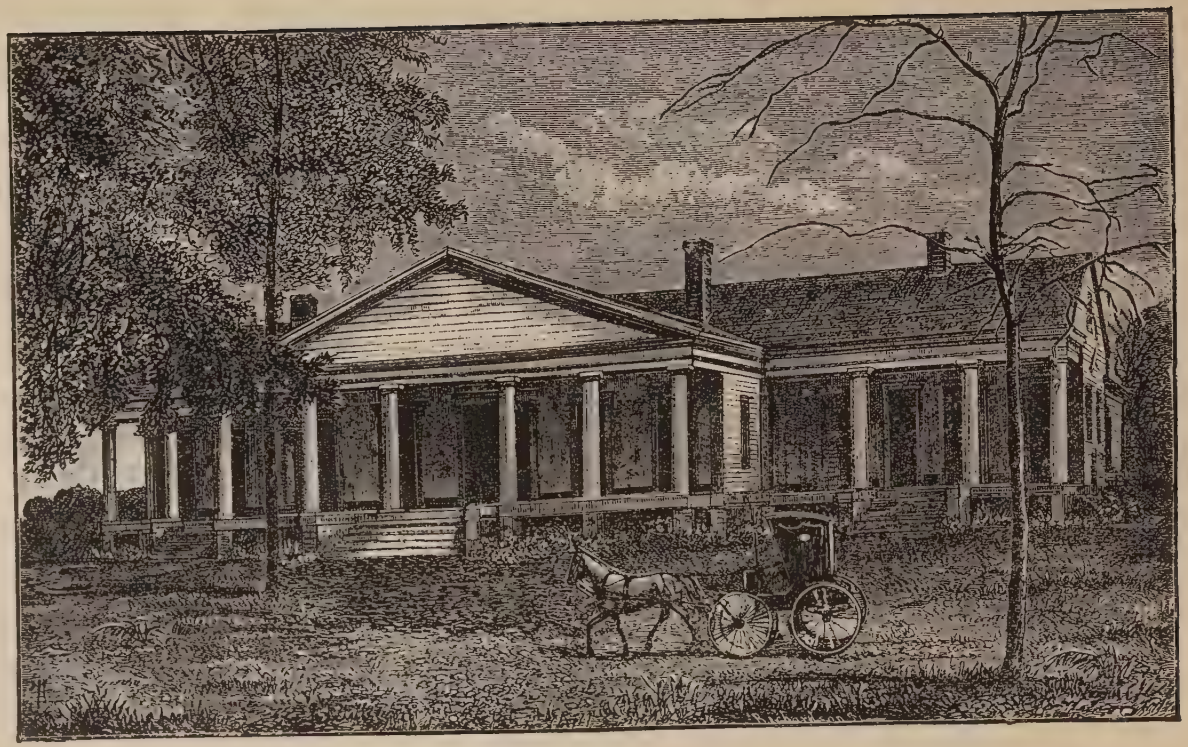
Varina found her hands very full at "Brierfield" at this

[1] Conversations with descendants of contemporaries.

time. The new house that had been under construction for several years was now completed. It was a large frame structure and though no such country house as "The Hurricane" it was of fine and pleasant proportion and of a style suited to the Southern climate. During the construction of the house, the building having been erected by New Orleans builders, a story went the rounds that Varina on one visit home occupied the old house for several weeks in order to watch the completion of the new, and that the "white marble mantles" suited her fancy very much. In the instance of the kitchen she insisted on a change of the plan in the absence of her husband. To this Mr. Joseph Davis strenuously objected on account of the additional cost to his brother. The story wound up with Varina telling him that if it was his kitchen she would not insist on it, but as it was her kitchen she would have it just as she wished it to be.

The house however, was at this time finished and occupied. Little had been done towards improving the grounds about it and it was with the keenest zest that Varina set about beautifying the lawn and gardens. In this she was eagerly assisted by her husband who she says was never too busy with plantation affairs to give thoughtful care to the flower yard, gardens and orchards, in which he delighted. Glad to be rid of public responsibilities, in which the woman at his side had also felt the strain of effort and disappointment, he craved and sought with her the peace and quiet of private life. From day to day they labored in the open, planting trees and shrubs about the new house and in the pleasant occupation his health began to improve.

They found the place in a state of dilapidation; very much "run down" the neighbors said. Excuses multiplied. The affectionate young servant who had been left in charge of



BRIERFIELD, 1850.

the old house seems to have been more fond of her mistress than faithful and had met Varina's anxious inquiry as to the condition of the crockery and other effects left in her care with the frank announcement, made in such confidence as to take away any personal responsibility, "Missus tain't no use to talk—what ain' broke is crack an' what ain' crack is broke." That both Varina and her husband exonerated her after this naive confession is evident from her reminiscences of that day, which always takes a humorous turn when she records the simple happenings among their dependents, both white and black.

Interrupted in the work of setting her house once more in order by the recent canvass in which her husband had been engaged she began now in earnest to look forward to a happy private life. The new house interested her immensely. Roses, ornamental shrubs and seeds of many variety and some from abroad began daily arriving; others from Natchez, Vicksburg and New Orleans, all of which was planted with the utmost care.[1] Varina though never exacting to the degree that ease and comfort were sacrificed was systematic and orderly in the management of her household and things ran easily and smoothly in her hands. She was kind to her servants but watchful that they conducted themselves properly, and the statement that she and Robert E. Lee ever mistreated negro servants is a fabrication hardly worthy an attempt to refute. People punished their own children at that day, and it may be set down for a fact that Varina endeavored, also, to make her various young servants conduct themselves properly. One must not forget

[1] Old records in the Mississippi Historical Society state that some shrubs were imported from Europe for both "Brierfield" and "The Hurricane."

that these young creatures were little more than half savages at that time. Instead of censure a monument should be raised to the South as their savior as a race.

In her *Memoir* she gives a delightful description of their life at the Brierfield at this period, so restful and full of charm one finds themselves wishing that such a life might have continued for them throughout. "Indeed with our books," she writes, "our mail twice a week, the garden, the humors of the cultivators thereof, occasional visits from our neighbors and the daily rides on our fast racing horses, with races on the smooth road wherever we could find one, we were very happy." "There was," she continues in a brief relaxation from the heavy task of historical narration, "thirty seconds difference in the speed of our horses, our races were rather even and we enjoyed the exercise exceedingly. Nothing could be more pleasant than the dense shade through which we could ride for miles in air redolent of the perfume of the mosses, flowers, wild crab-apple and plum blossoms."

She tells a marvelous story of the capture by her husband of an immense alligator that had its habitat on the great river and preyed on the young of the herds. The fertility of the Brierfield lands and the beauty of the dense forests along the river and of the wild flowers growing in the waste places of the fields did not escape her and lingered in her memory down to old age. "The land is so fertile at 'Brierfield' and in the adjacent country that golden-rod," she wrote, "grows large enough for a strong walking-stick, and the heads of the bloom are like banks of gold on the sides of the road. In every slough the lotos covers the surface with its lemon-colored chalices, and the green leaves are nearly a foot across. We planted a little switch, or scion of live-oak, with an at-

tenuated little root, in 1852, and now it shades ninety feet in all directions, and is over six feet in circumference. Possession crowns endeavor there, and that quickly."

It was at this happy and contented period that a still greater joy came into Varina's life. She had craved motherhood and the realization of it now filled her with ecstasy. Life was now complete. Never again she kept telling herself would they leave "Brierfield." Here in peaceful, congenial pursuits surrounded by their kindred and friends they would remain busily engaged in home making in which the child was to share so largely. To this view her husband readily inclined. He changed his will and gave the property he had willed his young relatives to his child. He was fond of agricultural pursuits, was a successful, and for that day, a scientific planter. He loved the outdoors, was fond of fine horses and other animals and was happy in his relations with his negroes. It was now easy for him to listen to the wife's entreaties that he would not enter public life again. To rear a family was a natural expectation shared by both and to do so one should remain in a permanent home.

Varina had made every preparation for the birth of her child and daily congratulated herself that it was in the quiet surroundings of the country home that the joyful event would take place. The child was born June 30th, 1853 and is said to have been robust and gracefully formed. They gave it the name of Samuel Emory for Jefferson Davis' father, Col. Samuel Emory Davis. It was an interesting and might be said a notable event to the large circle of kindred and friends scattered throughout the State. The house servants and the negroes on the plantation made of the occasion one of general rejoicing. It had always been a custom with the Davis negroes, and many other slaves of the South, to

bring gifts, and stand in a sort of sponsorship to the newborn children of their owner's household, a custom that was in return carefully observed by their masters and mistresses at the birth of the negro children. And now at "Brierfield" no sooner than it was safe for the young mother to receive them, each—both men and women, selected the best of their belongings and made their way to the "big house" to present their offerings. Great and small, she says "came up with little gifts of eggs and chickens, a squawking hen or a dozen large yam potatoes. A speech of thanks, also was offered for the birth of the child who was to take care of them and be good to them!" With Homer's females, they had no particular age in mind when they would cease to inherit the earth. The slave men, too, stalwart, loyal-hearted creatures who had grown tender and kind under the gentle rule and care of master and mistress standing between them and the first trying years of their civilization "looked lovingly on" as the women took the baby "in their arms for a kiss," prophesying for it a goodly inheritance in the following and other quaint exclamations: "De Lord honey, you ain never gwine ter work—we's gwine to do all dat for you." With a sense of her loss and sorrow soothed by time, but undimmed in the face of repeated sorrows and losses the mother recorded pathetically "And their words in part came true for in infancy our boy received his inheritance and needs nothing now." That the negroes were very happy over the birth of the child was evident in the fact that they kept coming to the house every day to see it, Varina laughingly told friends, until both master and mistress had to warn them that white babies and black babies all had to be fed and clothed, and work was the only method by which this could be accomplished, a thing

the abolistionist seemed very obtuse about, in the instance of the negro.

No sooner than the baby was old enough for the journey Varina made a round of visits to show him to the numerous relatives. Her mother's last child, to whom had been given the name of Jefferson Davis, was still a young child and the happy mother and daughter compared their blessings. Surrounded by friends and admiring acquaintances who rejoiced with her, and with the added blessing of motherhood she was never happier at any period of her life. So far she had had few trials, sorrows and anxieties of any serious nature and her mood and manner was one of gayety and mirth.

There was but one shadow resting upon her happiness and now that the child had come it seemed to grow darker. She dreaded another change that would mean the breaking up of their home again. Her entreaties in behalf of the baby's comfort and welfare had caused her husband to, in the first instance, decline an invitation to become a member of President Pierce's Cabinet. He, too, did not seem anxious for further public position. However, his defeat, and that by the boastful Foote, in the late canvass in Mississippi, had been a surprise to them. It was like Varina to want to see her husband triumph over his opponents and she found herself at times yielding to a desire to see him honored in the face of his recent defeat. Still, her love for private life, strong in these last months, had taken almost as deep root as ever. The new house was well appointed in handsome furnishings and silver, ornamental trees and blooming plants were springing up everywhere about its doors, the river view was enchanting, the negroes, whose peculiarities and humor were a constant source of pleasure to her, contented and well cared for and their horses

and other stock among the best in the country. There seemed nothing lacking in the life they were now leading. Left to her own inclination notwithstanding her disappointment over the result of the recent election one feels sure that at this period, even after she had tasted of the sweets of worldly pleasures in some measure, she would have preferred remaining in the country surrounded by friends and kindred and leading the same life that all of her wealthy young friends led in that portion of the State.

In both Whig and Democratic circles she was a favorite socially. However politics might divide them the Gentry managed somehow to flock together in their social life, and the best social circles in and around Natchez and Vicksburg were as polished and as worldly wise as any in the Union. There was much lordliness and ego, but little of the brittle glitter of the artificial in the life they led. Their shrine still was Nature, and her graces and simplicities made life for them both sweet and wholesome if to some extent what they of more sophistocated periods deem crude and immature.

But again Varina was to leave the Brierfield and the prosperous river country. Jefferson Davis while he had declined an invitation from Franklin Pierce to become a member of his cabinet, had accepted an invitation to the inaugural ceremonies. While in Washington President Pierce again urged him to become Secretary of War in his Cabinet and persuaded him to accept.

There was a great stir among the negroes at "Brierfield" during the preparations for what Varina and her husband knew would be a more extended absence than at any time as yet. James Pemberton, their valuable and most trusted foreman on the place, was dead. The supervision of the entire plantation had always been entrusted to him, and its owners

must employ the white overseer, an employee that had never so far been brought to the plantations. Their affection for the dead man had been deep and tender and their warm friendship had been treasured by him throughout life. Besides, they felt that a stranger could never fill his place in the matter of their own interests. Judging from the first hand knowledge that Varina gives us of the situation the talent and ability requisite for one to fill the position of overseer acceptably on the great Southern plantations were scarcely below that of a good general in the army. The same kindliness and tact coupled with strong will-power are necessary. That James Pemberton, their negro foreman, possessed all these qualities and represented the ideal overseer is seen throughout her *Memoir,* and she regrets that there were not more like him, observing that thereafter they did "the best that they could in the matter of a caretaker for our negroes but every year marked a decrease in our income."

Affection not only for this special black man to whom they always referred as their "friend," but for all in their care was strong in both husband and wife. The negro's fund of humor, insight into character and wariness in classifying the different grades of society—the "po white,"—the "half strainer" the "quality" even at this stage of their civilization attracted her attention. Her delineation of their varied traits and peculiarities, and the homely little stories that she recalls of them in after years, shows her to have been a close observer, with a deep appreciation of their efforts and a keen sympathy for them in any failure. "One point," she says, "was always insisted upon at the Brierfield place, the negroes must not be whipped, must be kept healthy, satisfied and happy, even if they made smaller crops." "Though under lax rules when stimulated by affection," she says, "they made

good crops and were proud of them, showing deep affection for their owners, but hardly respect for the white authority placed over them."

That the negroes attitude was caused to a large extent by the severe and callous treatment they received from their overseers, is true, but it must be recorded that it was from the boastful and haughty lords of the soil, whose treatment to a large extent of the "poor whites" was contemptuous in the extreme, that they received their definition of *caste*. The friendless condition at that period of the poor white element in the Southern population, in comparison with the pampered condition of the negro race, has been entirely overlooked by the historian. The former was not only left to shift for itself but was for the most part isolated.

Jefferson Davis' appointment in Pierce's Cabinet was regarded by the people of the State as a signal recognition of his superior ability. The Democrats lauded it over the expiring Whigs. Congratulations poured in upon him, and Varina decided that she could care for the baby just as well in Washington as at "Brierfield." The fashionables of Natchez and Vicksburg feted her both indoors and out. At a "picnic" she is remembered to have been beautiful in white organdy muslin trimmed in lace and innumerable tucks.[1]

On the day the master and mistress were to quit "Brierfield" for an indefinite stay, their negroes swarmed about the house giving vent to copious expressions of affection in which they mixed shrewd flatteries and diplomacies far more subtle and skillful, Varina wrote, than the race with whom they dwelt believed them capable of. Not only their affection, but their mental capacity she believed to be more than ordinary, and she laughingly attributed it both to their affection and

[1] Mrs. H. B. Kells.

superior mentality, that they were able to extract from her —with a thousand subtle and kindly graces, nearly everything she had in her trunks.

With this last stay at "Brierfield" as a country home with its simple but wholesome joys and pleasures, we now see its mistress with herself carefully dressed for traveling and her baby in its nurse's arms ready to go out once more into the fierce light of public life. It had not been her choice, as we know. Though yielding as she may have done to some latent ambition of which she was unconscious, it was obviously for love's sake that she gave up the ease and comfort of a happy private life. She confessed to a friend that henceforth she decided to regard it in the light of *destiny*. However, it proved to be the rosiest period of their lives. She was still a very young woman and what would be called in any assembly of her sex beautiful. In the first flush of young matronhood her figure, though well rounded, was still slight and graceful. Her fine, dark eyes that Richmond newspaper reporters in after years were given to describe as "eyes with a sad expression in them" sometimes held a pathos that clashed with her frequent merry moods creating a haunting, fascinating beauty difficult to describe.[1] People said her "eyes stayed with you." Her carriage and bearing always good was now what could be called queenly. In the quiet of "Brierfield" she had read constantly, books suggested by her husband, and with him had renewed her Latin and was quite proficient in the language. She also read her French, practiced some new fugues, and at present was probably one of the most accomplished and best educated women in the official circles to which her husband belonged. Married at a youthful age, she had no experience in affairs of love, except in the one

[1] Mrs. H. B. Kells.

instance, and her life was free of any disappointments or disillusionments on that score. But for the great stir in the world in which she, either from inclination or against her will, was destined to take part she probably would have been set down by some as only a handsome, attractive, and accomplished woman in the middle decades of a gentle age for women. But beneath the airs, affectations, and mincings of her day Varina was vigorous and enduring. How much more she herself was not aware. Still it may be said that her ambitions for public success were for the most part cultivated ones. Wifehood and motherhood had made her supremely happy, and she often playfully admitted "somewhat selfish." And the man for whom she had once more been willing to see herself uprooted from the ease and comfort of private life, the man who with his thoughts centering upon his first born, had just recently with his own hands planted fruit trees and blooming shrubs about his door, bred his stock and herds to still finer breeds, constructed levees and channels for the protection of his lands being eaten away by the great river, whose every mood he knew and of which he was passionately fond,—the man delighting in all the labors and wholesome pleasures of outdoor life was as well favored in physical appearance as the woman. In the open air and freed of the cares and details of public life he had in a measure regained his health, his carriage and bearing taking on a youthful elasticity and buoyancy. A little under six feet in height with a graceful figure, well cut features, fine, grey-blue eyes set, in a straightforward gaze under well-knit brows, and a high broad forehead, generous, reflective, showing both beauty and masterfulness, all made a splendid and impressive figure of manhood. At this age William E. Dodd in the American Crisis

Series described him as "handsome, resolute, challenging the attitude of every new comer and the confidence of those whom he represented." Such a commanding personality would appear somewhat dictatorial, even if the trait did not exist. But, though he had many friends, admirers, and even flatters who strenuously denied it, opponents said it did exist. To the hapless negroes in his keeping he was no other than "Marse Jeff" with whom they felt happy and wholly at ease whether killing an alligator or weighing a basket of cotton. Next to Varina the negroes knew him best. In her instance down to the day of his death she would always defer to him, would feel compelled instinctively to do so. But she and James Pemberton, his faithful body servant, along with every simple soul at "Brierfield" knew that there was no tyranny in the hand that with a sweeping gesture directed the way for others. These others in time might resent the dominant manner, and mental power that had been his birthright, might question his leadership, but while some have their history made largely for them, he would make his own. Essentially good, and overcoming all uneveness of mind and temper, with a singular composure and calmness, he would continue strong and serene through overwhelming catastrophe and calamity, and remain so to the end. Life as a whole was for him a thing which would always furnish food for thought, and about which he could always marvel and find interest even contentment. He was now perhaps happier than at any period of his life. As he turned once more from his home to go into high office, and take leadership in the affairs of his country, the wife, whose love for him soured critics describe as "foolishly extravagant," partaking of the nature of "adoration," had power far beyond that her light laughter revealed to know that he had, set in his soul, the

light that never fails—a Grail which would flame alike in victory and in disaster. Enchanted and obsessed with his purity, her favorite appellation for him beside the mystic one of "Banny" was "Sir Galahad"—and in dreadful after years withheld from her happy present "my old Prometheus."

CHAPTER XXXII

WIFE OF A CABINET OFFICER

Jefferson Davis had preceded his wife to Washington several months in advance. It was now mid-summer, warm but breezy Southern weather. Varina was to go by way of New Orleans, and after a few days in that city, she left under the care of Major T. P. Andrews to join her husband in Washington. She took back with her her young brother and sister, Beckett Kempe and Margaret Graham who were still in school. With her hands already full it would seem, she further assumed to a large extent a guardianship of the two during these years, placing them immediately in school in the fall after her arrival in the capital. She was deeply interested in the various members of her family and took much delight in the smallest details that concerned them. Of the young brother on their trip to Washington she has left a little story that indicates the interest she took in the small happenings of those about her. They remained she says, a day in Mobile, and the ten-year old boy went to dinner alone. The waiter brought first to him the wine card from which he thought it was the proper thing to order liberally. On leaving the table he confided to his sister that others around him were drinking it and he "tried very hard but could only drink a teaspoon full of it." That Varina enlightened him thoroughly in this and other proprieties cannot be doubted, since she was never sparing in wholesome advice to her young relatives, whose love and respect many incidents show she possessed in abundance.

Yellow fever appeared in a wide-spread epidemic in Mobile at this time and hastened their departure from the city. Many prominent people, especially those connected with the army, and proud of their acquaintance with Jefferson Davis, called on her as she passed through the various Southern cities. General David Twiggs she says came to see her in Mobile and told her that Col. Bliss, was quite ill with fever of which he soon died. She says of him in a very clear, snapshot portrait that "he was a handsome man of very dignified mien, an accomplished soldier, a graceful writer, and such a rare union of all that renders a man acceptable to his fellowmen that at West Point he was called 'Perfect Bliss.'"

On her arrival in Washington Varina found that her husband had for the time rented a furnished house on Thirteenth Street. Mr. and Mrs. Richard Brodhead occupied it with him and ministered to his wants in her absence. It was while they lived here that she gives us in her *Memoir* an interesting glimpse of their social life: "Here Mr. Guthrie, who was much esteemed and beloved by our family used to come," she says, "in the evening to talk his strong common sense! Sometimes he would favor me with shrewd criticisms of men and things. Once he was very indignant with Mr. Cushing for ripping out his scientific stuff to impress me; but I have found, and so told Mr. Cushing, that I do not know much, but things I do know well he does not. Once Mr. Guthrie sat down in one of the 'trumpery' chairs in our furnished house and being very tired dropped asleep.[1] He was a very large man and proved too much for the chair, so it gave way with a crack which awakened him. He rose de-

[1] A name she says her husband had given the small well worn chairs of their furnished house.

liberately, examined the chair for some minutes then looked at me quizzically and said, 'You know a man is heavier when he is asleep, do you suppose it possible I could have been asleep?' He lived a few doors from us, and Mr. Cushing boarded not far off. Mr. Campbell lived more in the center of the city and Governor Marcy only a few squares from the Executive Mansion. Mr. Dobbin, the Secretary of the Navy, was also quite near, so that the executive family could be summoned to a meeting in an hour or less time."

As the handsome, well-bred and cultured wife of the new War Minister in President Pierce's Cabinet Varina came more into the public eye than ever, and thoroughly versed in all the arts and customs of good society, possessing both wit and thoughtful intellect, she was recognized everywhere as a fitting mate for the strong, purposeful man to whom many were now pointing as a worthy successor to the present occupant of the White House. It was about this time that Carl Schurz wrote of him, "I had in my imagination formed a high idea of what a grand personage the War Minister of this great Republic must be. I was not disappointed. There was in his bearing a dignity which was entirely natural and unaffected—that kind of dignity which does not invite familiar approach but will not render one uneasy by lofty assumption." He was the most intimate and trusted friend of the President, not excepting Marcy. Endowed highly with the qualities of leadership and possessing a certain indescribable magnetism that fascinated both the intellectual and ignorant, it was but natural that the public should turn its eyes in his direction. But the man had little of self seeking in his nature, and was too much occupied with his present labors to give thought to any future place or power. He would perform the work in his hands well,

let the future bring what it may. In this he might have been shortsighted and perhaps was from the standpoint of individual accomplishment, for he was no intriguer with success.

To Varina, always a happy wife, it seemed now that her cup was running over. No woman during President Pierce's administration drew to herself more favorable attention, for good looks, for good taste in dress, for intellectual charm and power. If the softly curved face, that Natchez friends said made one think of the creamy Magnolia Grandi Flora, at times took on a more pronounced hauteur than in youth it was more often suffused with good humor, native friendliness and girlish gayety. The latter charm she retained much longer than is the good fortune of most women. It was during these years that she grew to be more fond of society, and the intellectual circles of Washington, than she had ever been. Of the men and women of that day she wrote in after years with an ease and familiarity that one records family reminiscences. Though she does not say as much about herself as one would like, from what she does say, it is gathered that she had her place in the very center of things. But with all the allurements of social life and the growing desire for prestige she could never divest herself of love of home and its privacy. Crowded as it had constantly been into the background by the circumstances of her life, this still made the truest appeal to her. Motherhood, to which she had looked forward with a hungry heart, had brought her a full realization of its joys. The boy was a fine robust child of perfect physical proportions, and at the age of two years could prattle plain enough, it is said, for others to understand; had named his cat and dog, knew many people and took according to his years an intelligent part in the life

about him. They noted all he did and said, repeated his apt saying to others and planned great things for his future as parents are wont to do the world over. The child, it is said, was very attractive to everyone and was very much beloved by Mrs. Pierce who constantly sent or called for him to drive with her. That this should give Varina and her husband pleasure is but natural, especially the fact of it coming from a distinguished source—great people have some human weaknesses with all their virtues else they would be gods outright, and very undesirable as earthly companions. The intimacy between the families was very close and affectionate. The names of Davis and Pierce were more often spoken together than any others in the national capital and this was another pleasure that Varina greatly enjoyed.

She and her husband still read together in the evenings and enjoyed long conversations about the leading public men of the day. The affairs also of his own high office continued constantly to be discussed between them. But while she sympathized with his aspirations in the fullest sense and had now acquired certain ones of her own it is no where recorded, nor can it be made out from any act of hers, that she ever urged him to seek high political position. When it came to him—and he himself seems at times to have been averse to it—she was ready to stand by his side. He felt her presence immensely and was fascinated by her bright personality, her individuality and variety. To the comfort of the home making spirit, so strong in her, he yielded his tired nerves as one in pain welcomes a balm. Varina sat securely on her throne. No other at any moment shared it with her. Though he reverenced womanhood and was courteous and kindly to all women, especially so when there became a common cause for sympathy, for none he exhibited the

slightest undue interest and admiration, and the most designing and presuming failed to draw from him any show of gallantry. Only the one woman drew and held him. None knew this better than Varina herself, and while she might sometimes feel, through the years, that his public duties absorbed him too much in the rearing of a large family, there was never a moment of her life that she did not feel secure of his affection. Some women might have held this against him, certain types of men might in later years go so far as to entertain a secret or even open dislike for both the man and the woman because of their happy marital relations. However there were no Pollards in Varina's pathway as yet. Too, for the most part she lived in an age when marriages that were not happy were largely unforgivable. While her happy marital relations might at times arouse a jealous feeling in the breast of the disillusioned and cynical this more often brought her handsome compliments. And Varina, more humorous than the women generally of her day, could not at all times withstand a smile at any manifestation of envy on the part of either men or women. Her *Memoir* clearly indicates that she could usually put to shame her critics and with some swift inherent power gained through her long and early association with her polished and erudite New England tutor. Still she inherited traits from her forebears and James Kempe was a jovial companion even when there were only water glasses on the table—Varina was said to have inherited his happy outlook, a quality that her tutor knew would protect her from the arrows, both of envy and misfortune. Her husband also possessed a sense of well-being, but the intensity and ardor of his nature suppressed it to a great extent; Varina's was a free stream, not so deep perhaps, but more spontaneous. No one enjoyed

merriment and laughter more, and she found many things laughable enough in the promiscuous circles of high official life. While she readily discovered the weaknesses and peculiarities of others she was kindly disposed and tolerant, scarcely ever uncharitable. She liked women, loved numerous women, and took an interest in all the affairs of her sex; enjoyed crowds, and in an impersonal way admired certain public men. That she continued passionately devoted to her husband was well known to every one about them. She often said that her greatest aspiration was to be like him and that she wanted all her children to have his nature. To her he represented the highest conception of manhood as embodied in the types that her tutor had taught her to value in history. The nearer she came to him the more she was captured and won by his singleness of purpose and beauty and chastity of thought. She sometimes wondered wherein the difference lay between herself and her husband and questioned herself she says at times seriously, at times humorously, in regard to it. Her British strain and lineage through Virginia was pure, and she had been constantly told that her New Jersey ancestors were among the worthiest. She, however, often pondered, for she was capable of intense thinking, what clear Welsh and Scotch strain had combined to make the singularly pure nature of the man who filled her life and thought with such rapture. For both, these were happy days, and for the woman prideful ones, it must be said, though she showed on more than one occasion her liking for the things of simplicity, not even despising to work with her own hands and making many of her baby's clothes.[1]

After going through their entire list people said no more fortunate nor happy family could be found. The distin-

[1] Mrs. H. B. Kells.

guished man who adorned his high office and had his work so well in hand, the beautiful and accomplished wife and mother and the lovely child were themes on more than one tongue. Still, as joyous and prospective as life was for them at that time, not even at this good tide of fortune were they without the trials and cares common to public life. There were envies, jealousies, and detractions still left to cast arrows in their direction. These were intended principally for the man. But not much, if at all did any criticism come to him from the masses—these regarded him with open admiration, and looked to him with a childlike confidence. But there were others of a "coarser" fibre who had ambitions, and here and there in the political circles about him and back in his own State were jealous spirits that never slept, individuals in public life whose machinations were to reach even in future years to handicap his best efforts.[1] And the woman who was in many things growing each day to be more like him in thought and aspiration, the woman, too, was to be affected by all that affected him.

[1] See Jefferson Davis by William E. Dodd.

CHAPTER XXXIII

FIRST SORROW. HUSBAND'S LABORS AS WAR MINISTER

FROM the house on Thirteenth Street which was later taken by Mr. Benjamin, Jefferson Davis and his wife moved to one a few blocks away on the same street. It was while living here that Varina's first great sorrow came in the loss of the beautiful little boy, who died after several weeks of a painful illness, the nature of which she does not inform us. She had known little sorrow or pain of any nature, had never been confronted with the loss of any loved one in the past, and now that it came to her in the death of her first born the blow almost unhinged her. The husband suffered as much as the wife. To the sad passage in their lives she makes the following pathetic reference in her *Memoir*: "There" referring to the new home on Thirteenth Street, "our only child sickened and after several weeks of pain and steady decline died at twenty-three months old and his lovely personality even at that early age had impressed itself upon many people." He was, she says, her husband's first thought on returning home after his day's labors. At the door "the little fellow would wait as patiently as possible, sometimes a quarter of an hour to kiss his father first." For many months afterward the father "walked half the night and worked fiercely all day." "A child's cry in the street almost drove him mad." To the last hour of his life she says he at times spoke of the child and what he might have been had he lived. Of her own grief she rarely wrote

at any time, holding it too sacred for public expression. Of this period of her sad bereavement she says simply that "the sympathy of thousands is gratifying and acceptable as a tribute to the living as well as the dead but one misses sorely the opportunity to mourn in secret."

But duty carried the heartsick man back to his tasks and the woman back to his side. The loss of the child, some whispered, though knowing little about such things, was a preparation to fit them for all future adversity. Anyway, they were of an age and apt pupils of a doctrine that found consolation in the belief that all sorrow and affliction were sent for some Divine purpose—that God afflicted his chosen in some such manner as the sculptor chisels his marble, looking to the perfect creation. The method in the instant of the statue at least seems to work well.

With their sorrow held close to their hearts, out of view of the world, they took their places once more in the life about them. Nor was the happiness of motherhood to be withheld from her. Shortly after the death of the little boy Samuel she gave birth to a daughter to whom she gave the name of Margaret, for her young sister Maggie, who still made her home with them. Her husband, she says, took great delight in the child and while they still sorrowed in secret over the loss of their first born little Maggie soon began filling his place.

With her husband's elevation to high office Varina, too, each year was coming more and more into public view in the social life in Washington, and as a star of some particular magnitude it can be well believed, though this last she would have disclaimed with an ironical smile. In Richmond and Charleston women were now hearing of her as among the most distinguished, beautiful and well-dressed women of the

National Capital. In a "Belle of the Fifties" Mrs. C. C. Clay recalls her at a masked ball in the role of Mme. de Stael and from her own account, a little ineptly phrased, Varina must have out shown the feminine world around her. Mary Boykin Chestnut, that exclusive lady of exclusive Charleston was one of her closest friends and destined to become more devoted with the years. The most prominent women and men in the public life of the nation both from the North and the South were finding in her society intellectual refreshments and were paying her pretty compliments.

With a lighter but more joyous outlook than that of her husband, her repartee and sallies sparkled by the side of his more profound knowledge without detriment to either. She possessed too many feminine charms to have ever been a manish woman and there was always a feminine grace even in her intellectual feats. Though not given to coquettry for Varina if anything was strictly Victorian she was attractive to men as well as to women. Endowed as she was with an abundance of good humor and confidence, a certain ironical view which she so frequently took of her efforts prevented any appearance on her part of being self-centered, admitting that she was to some degree. In the instance of the masque ball, with much merriment she later confided to a friend in Natchez that with all her husband's coaching her in her role, she made innumerable blunders, and in their bed room after the ball both went into peals of laughter over her poor repartee reported everywhere to have been comparable to De Stael[1] Always feeling that she was under no circumstances a failure—her ego being well enough developed—she liked to emphasize any defeat that she may have suffered if she could amuse others by doing

[1] Conversations with descendents of contemporaries.

so. The husband, not given to much laughter as he gathered public responsibility despite the cares of constant public life, was kept youthful beyond his years by the gayety and the light-heartedness of the young wife, her own imperfections and failings as well as those of others serving for many a humorous quip and burst of laughter in the privacy of their home. Varina was now developing marked social talent especially during the last years of her husband's position in the Cabinet. The first years she gave herself up at times to grief over the loss of her child but she regained herself exhibiting much fortitude and courage in an affliction that to a nature like hers must have been a sore one. Seeing how much her husband suffered, she told friends in Natchez, that she hid her grief for his sake.

There was one gift she possessed more transcendentally than most women. Supplementing her own sunny outlook on life she possessed the secret of making others contented and comfortable about her. Though she had no biographer at this time her scant references to herself in her *Memoir* of her husband give one the impression that life was very full for her during these years. It seems something to be regretted that Mary Boykin Chestnut, the close friend of later years, could not have covered this period of her life, a service that she rendered so acceptably in *"A Diary from Dixie"* excerpts from which arranged chronologically make one of the most satisfying portraits of Mrs. Davis during the tragic years of the Confederacy.

Jefferson Davis had now become one of the most distinguished figures in the public service of the country, and none knew better than Varina the influence the strong, powerful man by whose side she lived, and with whose labors she was so closely identified exerted on questions of State. Her de-

votion to and absorption in him were subjects of comment, and critics continued to reiterate that she was unduly obsessed with the idea of his superiority. But as foolish and ridiculous as this might make the wife appear to a highly unromantic and realistic age the characterization cannot be denied, though not everyone will set it down against her. It was a characteristic of the larger portion of the feminine element of her section and time. There was much, too, in Jefferson Davis to inspire a woman's love and admiration. There was about his tall graceful figure and personality a charm that won admiration from all. His ability as War Minister, a period in which his genius rose perhaps to greater heights than at any period of his life unhampered and free as he was to act upon his own discretion, was the theme of many tongues and has been set forth with jealous care by the wife in her brilliant *Memoir*.

Nor was his ability questioned by his opponents and critics. He was filling the place that his favorite political mentor had so ably filled under Monroe, and his equipment was in no wise inferior to that of his model's. In his efforts for the development of the great Western territory and in the organization of the army he was the superior not only of the great Calhoun but of any man in the public service of that day. Along with the marvelous schemes that surged through his brain, with creative power he possessed the practical method and system sometimes denied the dreamer. That he was fitted for some unusual destiny any one then studying him could but know. Step by step he had gone steadily up and up and without apparent effort until now he was one of the most dominant influences in national government. President Pierce, and Congress as well, had discovered that he had a genius for turning his dreams into

realities. These now trusted him with powers of a varied nature. All the work in his hand at this peak of his fortune moved along smoothly and his efforts were fruitful ones of much lasting good to his country.

There was at that time little or no visible strife to disturb public affairs. Questions that had vexed the mind several years prior were apparently settled and the country was now enjoying the peace and quiet that makes for progress and prosperity in a growing civilization. President Pierce at the outset had sent his wonderful message to Congress one that might have eminated from the brain of his War Minister himself judging from its key note—the building of the great Pacific Railway with which the latter's name was already linked. So well had the Mexican War turned out that even New England was convinced of its justice and practicality. The abolition of slavery was by a tacit understanding in *political* circles for the time ignored. As a local matter, however, it did not sleep for when did the spirit of reformation whether fiendish or angelic in its mode and manner die before accomplishing its purpose. The value of its ultimate blessing is at times its only excuse for its hurried and tragic methods; and the waste has to be accounted for.

With the country in a state—seemingly at least— of quietude and peace the Pierce administration spent its first years in constructive undertakings. The Cabinet was an able one and its War Minister soon convinced his co-laborers that he could now turn his dreams into realities, the brightest of which looked to the development of the new country and its resources. The improvement of the District of Columbia was left entirely to his care, the remodeling of the National Capitol with the addition of two wings and a massive dome, the improvement of the Smithsonian Institution of which he

had been a member of the first Board of Trustees, the building of the Cabin John Bridge, the recommendation of fire proof buildings for the records of the War Department, and nameless other undertakings of a progressive nature were carried by him to successful completion.

His influence, strong with the administration, it was but natural that he should advance the object of his dreams and the causes for which he lived. He sent ministers and ambassadors here and there—Buchanan he helped to the Court of St. James, Mason he sent to Paris, and even Marcy, his rival for Pierce's favor, felt the influence of his constructive policies in the Cabinet.

And there was ever his dearer and more fervid dream, one that had grown to be a part of his waking thought. To develop the great unknown West and protect the sparse population already with slow but certain footholds advancing here and there—this was constantly in his mind. He not only divined its marvelous possibilities and potentialities as an abode for future civilizations but his sympathy for its exposed condition, subject to the most tragic experiences, was warm and active. His first experiences in young manhood had been within its vast interiors and he was now better acquainted with it than any other man of his day in public life. To build fortresses at exposed and important points now that he was in a position to help shape his dreams, was the work which he set his heart and hand to accomplish. Surveys were made, exploration parties were sent everywhere and military roads laid out. Travelers from afar might see in it only another of Nature's death traps but to his keen eye great railroads stretched their way through level lands and over mountainous regions, and vast cities followed pulsing with rich life. In his zeal to hasten contact between exposed

points he had introduced the Arabian camel as a mode of transportation, and but for the war, which put an end to all progress of a constructive nature for decades and dreary decades, this oriental mode of travel might have alleviated much of the hardship and horrible experience of the settlers on the far frontiers during those harsh first years.

The entire army which at that time formed a major cog in the machinery of government received the benefit of his superior talent for organization. Among other needed improvements a medical corps was added, a department which he felt was not only a practical necessity but in addition was a matter of humanity. In every branch of the military a new spirit of patriotism and loyalty was infused. The high cost of living brought about by a heavy influx of gold and silver was regulated by a just increase in salaries. In new plans for the improvement of the Military Academy at West Point, his *Alma Mater*, always cherished by him, he joined hands with his old school fellow, Robert E. Lee and recommended the increase of the academic term at the military academy to five years. This was done, he said in order to build a greater West Point.

His last report was full of work of a constructive nature most of which again related to the far West, stores, arms, arsenals and troops were recommended for certain positions to protect the settlers from the frequent depredations of the Indians—not only the established settlers but the daily growing stream of immigrants trecking blindly but unerringly across the wilderness. Nothing was left undone by the energetic War Minister to explain and bring to the attention of the government the vast territory that seemed to have charmed his fancy. Scientific instruments and experts were sought to bring into immediate attention all objects and phe-

nomena of the region. Peace with the Indians was strengthened and the boundary between the United States and Mexico settled. In the organization of the army efficiency was the word that ranked with patriotism.

In the matter of expansion Jefferson Davis leaned to the Southern wing of expansionist and his vision included the now famous canal which was built at a later day by that visionaire of all ages. If an imperialist as some historians have styled him it was of the Rooseveltian class and type since in both was emphasized the ruling passion that seeks some future good for the coming millions, even though opposition must be withstood in obtaining it. In all his strenuous efforts for the attainment and prosperity of the country Varina was his most intimate confident and still his frequent amanuensis. In such an atmosphere and sharing in such a large degree his thought it is small wonder that she developed a strength of intellect that made her one of if not the most distinguished women of American history.

CHAPTER XXXIV

SALON AND PORTRAIT GALLERY

It was during these years of her husband's valuable service as War Minister that Mrs. Davis came into closer and more intimate contact with the brilliant minds of the National Capital than at any time previous. From high position to high position he had passed until they were at this time wholly in the public eye. She was now a member of what was called the President's family, and perhaps the most brilliant of the feminine portion of it, and her husband recognized as the most influential of the male contingent. With a clear, almost gay, touch she recalls long years afterwards the scenes of her more youthful days causing one to ask that if such a distant picture remained with her down to the last how keen must have been the zest and buoyancy of the happy woman of that day. Since her own reminiscences of the radiant years of her life as the wife of the most distinguished and influential member of Pierce's Cabinet are rich in local color and reflect so realistically the spirit of the various public gatherings, receptions, salons, and parlors in which she was a brilliant figure, the pages which make up this lengthy chapter are reproduced from her *Memoir*. On them the countless faces of the great and near great of that day appear before us with a life-like naturalness that no mere biographer of a later day could paint.

In reference to an important commission created by the War Department she wrote that,

"Colonel Delafield, Major Mordecai and Captain McClellan were sent as a military commission to the Crimea to study the methods of war adopted there. They were to visit England, France, and Russia as well. We invited the general officers of the Army and the ambassadors from these countries to meet the Commission. Generals Scott, Jessup, and Totten were present." Of Colonel Delafield, that he was an 'alert soldierly man with much of scientifice acquirement, but a curt manner.' Of Major Mordecai 'that he was a Hebrew, and one could readily understand, after seeing him, how that race had furnished the highest type of manhood; his mind was versatile, at times even playful, but his habits of thought were of the most serious problems, and so perfectly systematized as to make everything evolved from his fecund mind available for the use of mankind. His moral nature was as well disciplined as his mental, and his private life was of the purest and most admirable; he was an Israelite without guile."

Of Captain McClellan, the third member of the military commission she gives a more lengthy portrait in connection with a very humorous story of General Scott, which seemed to amuse her very much, and at that period and in fact throughout life she was usually ready to be amused. "He was quite young, and looked younger than he really was," she wrote, "from an inveterate habit of blushing when suddenly addressed; his modesty, his gentle manner, and the appositeness of the few remarks he made, gave us a most favorable impression of him. The instinct of protection was strong in General Scott, and he assumed a protectorate over Captain McClellan at once. General Totten and he were talking about traprock in an undertone, while General Scott was explaining to the Comte de Sartige how to

cook terrapin, 'mixing the wine with a judicious flavoring of spice, but no flour, sir—not a grain.' Captain McClellan just then uttered the word 'trap.' General Scott set his fork rampant and called across the table, 'No, sir—I *say no*, they are *never* caught in traps.' General Totten explained in his debonnaire way that they were speaking of traprock, but the General gave us a disquisition upon the proper manner of chasing buffalo upon the plains, and wound up with the announcement, 'I have never heard of their being caught in a trap, sir.'

"The horror of a wrangle, and the embarrassment of having the attention of the whole table called to his conversation, turned Captain McClellan a fine rosy purple.

"The French Minister expressed to me in a whisper his profound sympathy with General Scott's labors in having, according to the necessity of his nature, to teach the whole company at once."

"Each one of the ministers present had given assurance of the willing co-operation of their Government with the labors of the commission; but our officers were afterward not granted the facilities by France for which Comte de Sartige hoped—in fact they received scant courtesy, which was amply made up, however, by the kindness of the English and Russian Governments.

"They proceeded to the seat of war, where they messed with the English officers, saw the defects of their commissariat, their consequent suffering, their splendid gallantry in action, and compared the methods of the French and English in active warfare. After the 'Malakoff' was taken they went into Russia. There Captain McClellan mastered the language in three months in order to read their books on military science, and when the commission returned the fruits

of their journey were as prodigal and fair as those brought by the spies from the Promised Land. The discriminating world praised the acumen of the Secretary who had sought out so able a commission, and the labors of the accomplished soldiers who had done honor to his choice.

"Mr. Davis's appreciation of Captain McClellan was an instance of his happy faculty of discerning the merits of young people and drawing them into sympathetic communion with him by his charm of manner. There was a refined assumption of equality and co-intelligence between himself and them, which conciliated at once." In continuation of the same subject she gives an interesting insight into their every day life, glimpses that one wishes had been more frequent in her *Memoir*: "A striking instance of this occurred with my little brother Jeff. When he was nine years old I sent him to see his brother to be rebuked for playing 'hookie' from school; he returned not disconcerted, but quite cheerful. I asked him what Mr. Davis had said. He answered, 'Oh! I shall not do it again, but brother Jeff knows how a man feels, and understands that he sometimes gives way when he is bored without meaning to do it.'

It was about this time she says that they returned to the house, "once occupied by Mr. Edward Everett, at the corner of F and Fourteenth Streets, much nearer to the War Department, not larger, but more commodious."

At this time they were entertaining in a somewhat lavish style and of the various distinguished people of both official and private life who attracted her attention she has left charming and delightful impressions which we trust will meet the eye of descendents and be of interest:

"President Pierce," she wrote, "had brought with him from Concord the son of a widowed friend, to be his private sec-

retary. Sidney Webster was a young man of pleasant, decorous manners, and a nice sense of propriety and honor. He made himself very acceptable to the President's Cabinet, and to visitors generally. The position is a difficult one to fill, and the temptation is very great to a young man to arrogate to himself the importance due alone to his office. Mr. Webster was the most impersonal private secretary of all I have known in that position. It is doubtful whether he knew how to make political combinations, or ever tried to effect any, but he was all the more successful for the lack of such effort. He rendered every needful courtesy, performed punctiliously every duty, and for the rest was a great favorite in society, and enjoyed his leisure hours exceedingly. As one grows old and wiser than of yore, the things that friends do not do are even more occasions of grateful memory than the deeds they perform; for that reason it is so hard to describe a thorough gentleman, so many of his virtues are those of abstention.

"Mrs. Pierce was a broken-hearted woman in weak health, and not a person who found it easy to become acquainted with strangers. She had one child, a very promising boy, and, after Mr. Pierce's election, while the three were taking a little journey together, there was an accident which precipitated the train down a steep bank. Mr. Pierce found his little Ben insensible, as he supposed, but upon removing his cap saw that the poor lad's head was crushed.

"The grief-stricken mother was brought to Washington, more dead than alive. Certainly there was little in the new life she led there to comfort or cheer her, and her depression was rendered still greater by being a constant sufferer from an obscure ailment. She was very small, and never could have been pretty, but was well read, intelligent, and

gentle, and was a person of strong will and clear perceptions; her husabnd's society was the one thing necessary to her, and he was too overworked to give her much of his time. She was so like the picture of Mrs. Elizabeth Barrett Browning that one who knew it was deceived into believing that it was her likeness. She had a keen sense of the ridiculous, but was too ceremonious to indulge it often. She lived much within herself. With her sorrow pressed close to her stricken heart she bore her position with patience and gentle dignity.

"Of Mr. Pierce I cannot speak as reliably as another who loved him less. All sympathies seemed united in him. No one was so poor that, in any honorable personality, Mr. Pierce could not do him reverence. His door-keeper once speaking of him, said: 'He does not keep his manners for the fine folks that come here, but he gives me the compliments of the morning as grandly as he does to General Scott.'

"His courtesy was unfailing—he was incapable of feigning, and was, if he disapproved of anything a friend had done, gravely sincere and plain in the expression of his opinion, but in the reproof there was no semblance of a sense of superiority, and this took out all the sting. He was one of the most genuinely honest, upright men I have ever known. His wants were few, his personal habits were rather elegant. He accepted no presents, but did not seem to think it a matter to be vaunted though he dearly loved to give, and gave much to the needy.

"At the time the first expedition to Japan returned home there were sent as presents a large number of curios and much fine lacquer work—besides some Japanese dogs—very singular animals, unknown in the United States at that time.

Mr. Pierce came over to see us early after breakfast the day after they arrived, as glad as a boy to have something to give to his friend. He was hardly seated before he burst out with, 'General, I have a dog for you.' Mr. Davis said, 'What can I do with a dog in town?' 'Oh!' said the President, 'you can put it in a tea-saucer, if it crowds your house.' The house had twenty-three rooms in it, and our family were four in number. It was in those days one of the most spacious dwellings in Washington. After this sally, Mr. Pierce went on to say that if I chose I might 'abstract' some of the exquisite presents sent by the Japanese Government as they belonged to no one; but Mr. Davis said, 'In that case my wife knows they do not belong to her.' So we went over and looked on while the beautiful things were unpacked—and had a barmecide feast of the eyes. In the evening a messenger arrived from the President, who took out of his coat pocket a little creature with a head like a bird with a blunt beak, eyes large and popped, and a body like a newborn puppy of the smallest kind. He was prettily marked with a band of white about his otherwise jet-black body. A coffee-saucer made an ample scampering ground for him. On a tiny string about his neck was traced Bonin—because he was born in passing the Bonin Islands. Thus was installed Mr. Davis's pet and the scourge of the servants and of the family. Bonin was so small and dark that it was difficult to distinguish him from the hues of the carpet, and if ever a bashful young lieutenant came to pay his respects to the Secretary of War, he entered in a somersault over the dog, or he trod on it, and Bonin, yelping out his indignation, had to be soothed by his master. If I complained of this nuisance Mr. Davis bowed and offered to build a house

for myself and my dog. However, Bonin grew to be somewhat less troublesome as he gained in age and experience.

"When he left Washington, in 1861, Bonin was given to Patrick Jordon, Mr. Davis's faithful messenger, to be reclaimed when convenient, but this distinguished Japanese, one of the first who acquired citizenship by years of residence, went in an unhappy hour during the war to a fair, where the persons present, finding out that the little dog was Mr. Davis's fed him with so many dainties that he died of indigestion. His master never ceased to talk of and regret him."

Of President Pierce she wrote feelingly, "We never understood why Mr. Pierce was undervalued and spoken of by his opponents as a man of no force, except that he never assumed anything, and when he asserted himself, which was not seldom, the desire to make the dissonance as little painful to his opponents as possible, gave him the air of seeking a compromise.

"He never yielded a point to his Cabinet on which he had once expressed an opinion, and no one of them, and they were nearly all positive men, would have thought of presuming to dictate to him. Only once, I believe, was there any serious divergence between him and Mr. Davis. Mr. Davis expressed his inability to agree with the President, and after the Cabinet meeting he came home and told me the circumstance, and that he could not recede, as he looked upon the act as subversive of justice. He added, 'I will not insist upon my view of the matter, but I will resign rather than embarrass the President, or do what I consider an injustice.' Late in the evening the President sent an explanatory note, offering to announce himself responsible for the objectionable course, and so it was settled." . . . "A most absurd

thing occurred through my sympathy with a young couple who were about to be separated in consequence of the husband being ordered to San Francisco at a critical time for the wife. Personally anxious about his wife, the lieutenant craved a postponement of three or four weeks; but General Scott refused the application. The officer had married into the Taylor family and the general was not intent upon serving them.

"There were no railways then to that distant State and to go there one must cross the Isthmus or double the Cape. Then the journey was more tedious and the communication more difficult than it now is with China. In my distress I appealed to the Secretary of War, but he said: 'I cannot interfere with General Scott's prerogatives; it would be offensive, and our relations are now strained. I am as much troubled about it as you are.' I laughingly said, 'I shall appeal to the President,' and accordingly wrote to him at once, that the Secretary of War declined to relieve the lieutenant, that I thought it unnecessary severity, and that I hoped he would grant the delay, and signed it V. H. Davis. Weeks passed on and no answer came. The President rode up to my carriage the evening preceding the parting of the young people, and noticing that I was depressed, asked what had 'gone awry.' I told him, and said, 'I have never asked any favor of you except this, and it was an intensely personal one to me.' He laughed heartily and said, 'I noticed the handwriting, how much like the General's it was, and thought it a man's hand and referred the note to him, but I will go at once and send General Scott a request to postpone the young fellow's departure for two months.' He went back home immediately and arranged everything satisfactorily. In the meanwhile I interrogated my husband

about the note. He smiled, and said, 'You had a right, Madam, to be put on file, and there you are.' For some time after this whenever the President saw me he inquired if my young people were all right.

"The wives of Mr. Pierce's Cabinet officers labored in their sphere as well as their husbands. We each endeavored to extend hospitality to every member of Congress, of both Houses, at least once during the winter. We did not bank the mantels with flowers as is done now, for very good reasons—it was not the fashion, and many of us, I, for one, could not bear the heavy odor in a crowded room. We bought, out of our private purses, all the flowers we used, and we were none of us what would in this day be called rich. If we had been so at the beginning of the official term, we should have become poorer every day, as well from inattention to our private affairs as to the utter inadequacy of the salary. A few palms or azaleas growing in pots, and other ornamental plants grouped about the room, made them acceptable, and ignorance was bliss."

Of public matters she wrote, "If a measure was to be recommended by the Administration, the Chairmen of the Legislative Committee, to whom these recommendations would be referred, were invited and the plan was informally unfolded to them. If a man was dissatisfied with the Administration and not personally offensive in his disapprobation, he was invited to breakfast or some informal meal, where a personal explanation was possible. However, these methods probably prevail now as they did then, and will continue so to do until trees cease to 'bear fruit after their kinds.'

"If a scientific association met at Washington, or whenever any distinguished people met in convention, they were invited as a body to an entertainment in their honor.

"At one of these I remember a remarkable experience. The morning of the day on which the Association visited us, Dr. Robert Hare, at that time the most noted chemist in America, had endeavored to read a paper which he had written upon mechanical tests of spiritual manifestations. The paper was not accepted and declared irrelevant, and he felt much hurt. Upon my making the remark, I being quite ignorant of this occurrence, that I had been with a party of ladies to see Miss Fox, who was afterward Mrs. Kane, and felt humbugged, but could nevertheless not account for the noises made, or the answers to questions asked her, Professor Hare immediately stated his grievance against the society, prefacing it with, 'Truth is the Mother of Science, and her children should not be ashamed of her.' He then proceeded to tell me that he had been impressed by some unaccountable phenomena in the practice of Spiritualism, and determined to submit the presence of disembodied spirits to a mechanical test. He made a disk and put the letters of the alphabet all over it in 'pi.' In the centre he placed two index-hands, on the outer edge there were figures which one hand registered, while the other hand indicated letters. He attached a sensitive level to the disk—he did not explain the machinery, but told me that the spirits spelled out difficult chemical problems by the aid of the letters—and pulled down the level to the weight of 150 pounds. Professor Henry came up while his confrere was speaking, and smilingly turned the conversation by saying: 'Now if Daddy Lambert were alive and could be induced to weigh himself, then we should be convinced;' but the jest seemed to very much annoy Professor Hare.

"Professor Henry was a most attractive man."[1] Though

[1] Professor Joseph Henry was at that time Director of the Smithsonian Institution.

he was plain and quiet in manner he so loved his pursuits, that with the mention of them, he became alert and communicative. Once when Mr. Davis had been enjoying the Professor's learning, a member of Congress who wore dark-green spectacles and indulged in aspirations, without remembering that endeavor should supplement them, came in and whispered: 'I wish Professor Henry would talk to me about weighing the stars.' Mr. Davis turned the conversation into that channel; other company coming in, he left the pair together. When he looked at them an hour afterward, the member was rigid and sound asleep behind his spectacles, and the gentle Professor was taking the measure of the solar system with a benign air.

"Once Professor Henry and I" she continues her delightful reminisence "went to Alexandria together on the little ferryboat. He began describing a visit which he had just made to the circus, but in the midst of his talk, suddenly stopped and looked intently at a little valance nailed around the seat which was describing constant succeeding undulations as the wind blew the ruffle—he had stopped at the antics of the 'so-called tame rhinoceros'; and after ten minutes' silence he added, 'and the same forces may make the undulations of the waves, to say nothing of the tides, which are less understood.'

"I did not remind him of the hiatus, and he talked most charmingly of cognate subjects until we reached the house of good old Mr. Hallowell, to whom my little brother, Beckett Kempe Howell, was going to school. Mr. Hallowell was a 'Friend,' and was equally esteemed and beloved by the whole community, among whom he had lived from youth to old age. He said, 'Thy brother is always seeking for a royal road to knowledge, and is dull at figures.' Professor Henry,

seeing the child was mortified, kindly took his hand and said, 'Send him to me and I will explain the rule of three to him.' I gratefully accepted his offer, and he did explain so distinctly that Beckett never forgot the lesson or the rule. If great men knew how acceptable their condescension is to the ignorant, they would cultivate the amenities of life.

"Professor John Le Comte was another of the savans who impressed me most pleasantly; he brought with him his exquisitely beautiful wife, who shone resplendent among the quiet old figures there. Professors Agassiz and Pearce, with a whole galaxy of scholars and specialists, were present, whose names will go sounding down the aisles that science treads, as pioneers of its discoveries and builders of its temples.

"There were dinners given to the officers of the Army, especially by the Secretary of War, where they unbent like boys and told campaign stories—General Gibson, the Commissary-General, General Jessup, the Quarter-master-General, General Lawson, the Surgeon-General, General Towson, Paymaster-General, Colonel Abert, of the Topographical Engineers, and a number of others of less degree. At one of these dinners General Jessup entered upon a flood of memories of the time when he was staying with some other officers, by invitation, at Kempton, with Colonel James Kempe, at Natchez, Miss. He laughed over and repeated a piece of doggerell to which each man added a line as it went round the table, and then proceeded to describe their host's exquisite performance on the flute, 'but,' said the dear old General, 'when we made him sing "The Tough Old Commodore," he talked it and could not turn a tune.' While there, Aaron Burr was arrested at Natchez, and he and his captors were also bidden to Kempton. There was a short

parley among all the guests and the host, and it was decided to ignore Colonel Burr's condition; so he came to Kempton, sardonic and brilliant, but entirely impersonal in his conversation. The General turned to me and said, 'I wonder you did not know those people, as you live at Natchez? Major Chotard was a charming young fellow also, who was on a visit there.'

"I quietly answered I did not know them, but my mother did. Colonel Kempe was her father, and Colonel Burr was my father's second cousin on the maternal side. I did know Major Chotard, who was an elegant man, a refugee from St. Domingo, who illustrated all manly charms and virtues in his own person.

"During one of these General's dinners, as we called them, someone said that men were worse than they used to be. My husband exclaimed, that this would disprove the Christian theory that, with the diffusion of our Lord's system of morals, mankind would unconsciously be moulded into higher forms of thought and nobler action.

"General Jessup, who, in his own personality, was a fine example of Christian culture, said, with some heat—there was never a more pernicious statement, or one more untrue. He then went on to show that the vices of the Quartermaster, in his youth, were those a sergeant of the regulars would blush to commit now—the petty speculations, he said, were nauseating in that day—time has drawn a curtain over the unseemly sight. General Gibson coincided with him that people were growing steadily better. General Jessup speaking of the force of habit, said he could not understand a man becoming subject to it, and told me that early in life he found that smoking made him nervous, and from that time he had set aside the money that would otherwise have been

spent for tobacco and used if for books. 'Now,' said he, 'I have a fine library all bought with cigar money.' General Gibson was a man so beloved that I never heard one derogatory word of him. He never was known to deny charity to those who asked it of him, and no man who had merited his good opinion would willingly forfeit it, or having taken his advice doubted his wisdom. His nephew, whom he brought up, Colonel George Gibson, of the United States Army, long afterward prove the heredity of nature by his own life of usefulness. He was honored in a less degree only than his uncle had been, and was equally worthy and beloved.

"General Totten was an exceedingly elegant man in his deportment, and most kind-hearted and observant of all the courtesies of life, besides being a soldier in the scientific sense of the term. The Surgeon-General was a spare, keen-eyed man of warm sympathies, hot resentments, and great dignity. He was a clever physician, and had a composure of manner most reassuring under trying circumstances; but he suffered under one idiosyncrasy of which I have never seen another example. The moment the name of a person he disliked was mentioned, he unfolded a large bandanna handkerchief and commenced sneezing, which continued spasmodically until something diverted his attention. The sight of a witty old lady who disputed the boundary line of their adjacent property, and had offended him grievously once by one of her caustic remarks, used to make him sneeze so he could not talk to her, but between sneezes he said, 'I'll write, madam, I'll write.'

"Of General Scott I saw but little. He was a great-looking man, with the grandiose manner, in a less degree than was quite common to the men of his day. Mr. Davis and he had an unfortunate difference about a claim of General

Scott's for pay, which he could not allow. This led to a correspondence painful to both, which having passed out of sight, it is useless to recall.

"An unusual number of pleasant people were in Washington during Mr. Pierce's Administration. In the winter of 1854, Mr. Charles O'Connor came there with his handsome bride, the ci-devant Mrs. McCracken. I knew so little then of New York lawyers, and had only heard of him through his knightly defence of Mrs. Forest, that I should not have noticed the announcement of his presence but after his noble head, illumined by large sensitive grey eyes, met my sight, the impression he made was never forgotten. His deliberate manner of speaking in a man of less calibre would have been tiresome, but one can patiently wait for treasures no matter how slowly they may be doled out. They were much fêted and we met them everywhere, and had the pleasure of receiving them at our own house several times. At that time Mr. O'Connor conceived the respect and regard for my husband which bore such priceless fruit in our day of helplessness and sorrow.

"Mr. and Mrs. Charles King, of Columbia College, spent the winter in Washington, and Mrs. King remains an ideal old lady to me, her accomplishments were so varied and her judgment, breeding, and temper were so perfect. Mrs. Gracie was also there—a dignified, agreeable woman. General Gracie, of the Confederate Army, her splendidly gallant son, died on the battle-field and his loss was bitterly mourned by the whole army as well as by his beautiful young widow. Mr. Edward Everett also spent the winter there, a man whom to know was to admire, for his social graces were in excess even of his oratory. The Honorable A. Dudley Mann remained throughout the season in

the city, and then I first beheld this 'perfect man.' To all the accomplishments of a trained diplomat he united every Christian virtue; with a detestation and scorn of wickedness he nevertheless grieved over the sinner, and was in his own life a shining exemplar of the Christian charity that suffereth long and is kind. He left a history of his life and times which I hope his son will soon publish, for his reminiscences will be of rare value to the world of letters. Mr. Davis and he gravitated toward each other at once, and loved like David and Jonathan, until extreme old age, and my husband only tarried here a month after Mr. Mann, but did not know his friend had 'crossed over' before him.

"One of the men of mark at this time was Mr. Charles Sumner. He was a handsome, unpleasing man, and an athlete whose physique proclaimed his physical strength. His conversation was studied but brilliant, his manner deferential only as a matter of social policy; consequently, he never inspired the women to whom he was attentive with the pleasant consciousness of possessing his regard or esteem. He was, until his fracas with Mr. Brooks, fond of talking to Southern women, and prepared himself with great care for these conversational pyrotechnics, in which, as well as I remember, there was much Greek fire, and the 'set pieces' were numerous; he never intruded his peculiar views upon us in any degree, but read up on the Indian mutiny, lace, Demosthenes, jewels, Seneca's morals, intaglios, the Platonian theory, and once gave me quite an interesting resumé of the history of dancing. Mr. George Sumner, who was rather a short man and thick-set, also spent part of the winter in the city upon his return from the Crimea, which he had visited as the reporter for some newspapers. He talked in the same predetermined artificial way, but had much that was

new and interesting to tell. One evening, in the presence of two officers of the army at our house, he said he had ridden camels without a bridle. 'How did you guide them?' said General Emory. 'By my foot touching them first one side or the other on the nose,' answered Mr. Sumner. General Emory took out a pencil and made a calculation, and after Mr. Sumner had passed to other subjects, the General interjected suddenly the remark, 'According to my calculation, your leg must be nine feet long to guide a camel as you did.' Mr. Sumner made no response. He had a large collection of field maps made in the Crimea, and traced the course of the different battles in a very interesting manner with little tin flags.

"At midsummer we took a house two or three miles out of town, and spent the heated term there, so that I could be near my husband, who was far from robust.

"Mr. and Mrs. Pierce used frequently to come to us for the day, and such intimate talks, such unrestrained intercourse and pleasantries exchanged are charming memories. He became eloquent over the genius, the shy, tender ways, and the agreeable conversation of his friend Hawthorne one day, and stuck his hands in his pockets as he paced up and down. Mrs. Pierce cast an appealing look at the recusant hands, to which the President answered, 'No; I won't take them out of my pockets, Jennie! I am in the country, and I like to feel the comfort of it.'

"He took a never-failing delight in talking to our little Maggie, who was a clever child of eighteen months, and could talk and walk. He eight years afterward related, during a visit to us at Fortress Monroe, the incident of her suppressing her tears when the dog snapped at her, lying down

beside him until he went to sleep, and then biting him on the nose as retribution.

"One of the measures of Mr. Davis's administration of the War Department was what was called the four years rule. That an officer should not remain on duty at distant posts, or at ease in Washington, for more than four years. To some the army had been a sinecure. They remained year after year, made welcome by every host, and, it is fair to say, contributing their full quota to the social enjoyment of the capital, while others tramped from outpost to outpost with their families, knowing Washington only through their marching orders. Sometimes the enforcement of this rule was as painful to Mr. Davis as to the recipient of the order. Notably in the case of his dear and intimate friend, Major Robert Anderson.

"One charming young fellow, who was the best dancer of his day, went to a surgeon for a certificate that his health did not permit his braving the hardships of the frontier. It was given him in the cognate language formulated by the medical faculty from the Latin. He took it and went to his post, bidding farewell, for only a few days, to his regretful friends. When he reached Fort Worth, to which he was ordered, and presented his certificate, the surgeon laughed immoderately, and told him it was a certificate that he had suffered from an accumulation of dandruff in his hair; that he was quite bald and his head glistened only added to his indignation. This came very near causing a duel with his jocular medical friend.

"Many officers having become established in the city, and being hampered in many ways, resigned, and there was widespread dissastisfaction among the ease-loving minority in the different cities, and many appeals for a prolonged stay; but

the Secretary was inflexible. However, he ran when the wives appealed, and always showed the white feather to them, but without surrendering at discretion.

"At this same time Mr. Dobbin was in trouble on account of the projected reorganization of the navy, and many were dropped. One of them who had fared badly thus explained the situation to me: 'There are, you see, three causes for dismissal, mental, moral, and physical unfitness—I had all three.'

"There were fine old men who had never for a moment believed the navy could exist without them, but who for some good reason had been waiting orders for fifteen years, from whom all means of existence were taken away when they were too old to work. They woke up from comfort and dignity, to find themselves poverty-stricken and discredited, for at that time there was neither an army nor a navy retired list. The injustice was manifest, and their grief and humiliation most painful to witness. The whole city pulsated with sympathy.

"The Retiring Board, presided over by Commodore Shubrick, was composed of the best men available for the purpose, but, of course, private pique was one of the reasons assigned for their action, and the atmosphere was murky with tears and indignation. Mr. Dobbin actually became feverish and all unstrung under the pressure brought to bear upon him. A lady pursued him so relentlessly that he said: 'My dear Madam, you shall, if you please, have my resignation to hand to the President, if you think you can procure a reversal of the decision from anyone else.'

"One poor woman met me in the Senate gallery, and said, 'What can they mean by unfitness, my husband is six feet two in his stocking feet.' An example of the non sequitur

in reasoning which is not often excelled. Under the pleadings of the unfortunates, in which all classes united, many of them were restored to their positions, but it was necessarily a time of great trial, and the ruin of a great many who were lost that the navy might live.

"This experience added new vigor to Mr. Davis's efforts to introduce a retired list, as he was most painfully depressed by the mortification and suffering of his old friends.

"During his four years in the Cabinet he worked with an increasing ardor that tired out all his assistants—sometimes he came home to dinner at two o'clock in the morning, bringing with him his dear friend and coadjutor, Colonel Samuel Cooper, Adjutant-General of the United States Army, who, being much older than my husband, looked ready to faint. Luncheon with wine was often sent from home to the War Department, but Mr. Davis forgot to eat or offer the repast to the Colonel.

"When Mr. Buchanan came into office, Colonel Cooper gravely said that the consolation he felt for losing Mr. Davis was that he could rest; 'for,' said he, 'another four years would have killed me; Mr. Davis is never tired, he takes no account of time.'

"Amidst all this eager labor, the humblest soldier could get an interview with him as readily as the greatest general.

"One day a woman called at our house before he was up—seven o'clock, and was given audience; after a half-hour's talk with her, Mr. Davis came in to our breakfast-room with a soiled, yelling little boy by one hand, and followed by a frowsy young woman with a crying baby. He ordered a chair placed for her at the table, courteously invited her to be seated, and led the child up to me, saying, 'My little man, there is a lady who comforts crying boys.' After quiet was

restored, it was developed that she had come to appeal from a sentence pronounced against her husband, who was a private in the ranks, and Mr. Davis had promised I should take care of the children until she could go to visit the President and appeal for a pardon. He accompanied her and secured it, while I performed the expiatory sacrifice at home. The poor creature came back in the course of time, bringing me a note from my husband begging that the family might have an early dinner, a dollar be given to each of the children, and the butler be sent to pay their passage home and see them off safely on the train.

"This was not an isolated instance; for hundreds could be cited of his tender consideration for the helpless or sorrowful people who came to him.

"I once became very tired of the visits of a poor little dwarfish insane man, known in Washington for having expressed his intention to murder Mr. Clay. This little outcast came very often to see and levy upon Mr. Davis for contributions, and I said, 'I do not know how you can bear with him, he is so intrusive.' He looked troubled and said, 'Perhaps if he were agreeable he would not care to call so often —it is a dreadful fate to be distraught and friendless.' When the poor man was troublesome to others, and after he had been committed to the insane asylum, my husband sent supplies of letter paper and envelopes to him in order that he might follow his inclination to write long letters to everybody, and Mr. Davis personally answered those addressed to him.

"His heart was so tender that he was sometimes betrayed into misplaced sympathy. There was a poor disfigured creature spent by disease, with a talent for mendicancy, who used to sit in front of the War Department and knit stockings

winter and summer. Every day the messenger of the Department, Patrick Jordan, was instructed to pay her a small sum of money, and at last he insisted on my sending her a little cushion to prevent her taking cold, though Patrick always declared that she was rich and a 'practiced outlaw.' This messenger became so attached to him and served him so well that when we left Washington Mr. Davis gave him a handsome gold pencil-case. Some years ago, when Patrick died he left the pencil to be returned. Mr. Davis found much comfort in the loving message which accompanied the pencil, and his eyes were misty with tears as he closed the widow's note.

"He abhorred the idea of oppressing the weak so greatly that it was a difficult matter to keep order with children or servants. If the children were sent from the table for misconduct he called them to kiss him before they went, and our little girl Margaret Howell, would as soon as she could talk say, 'I wish I could see my father, he would let me be bad.'

"Mr. Davis's chief clerk and good friend, Colonel Archibald Campbell, used to remonstrate with him on the sums he gave to charity. 'In anyone else,' he said, 'it would be a mere yielding to importunity, but after they have left Mr. Davis grieves over their suffering, and it wears him very much.'

"During Mr. Pierce's Administration the Holy Father, Pius IX, sent his Legate to America, and the Roman Catholic families were all anxious to receive him; notable among these was Madame de Sartige, the very agreeable wife of Comte de Sartige the French Minister. Her sister, Mrs. Rice, at a dinner party at the Legation, brought down her chubby baby in its little frilled night dress, and held it smil-

ing up to Monseigneur the Legate, for his blessing. Mrs. Rice was a handsome young creature, and it was a lovely picture as she stood against the pale blue velvet hangings, and presented her little baby to the great dignitary. The baby, Thorndike Rice, her only child, grew to manhood.

"In this year, also, the Japanese princes and their suite came to Washington. They were lodged at Willard's Hotel. Their attendants, with their little teapots, braziers, low stools, and other paraphernalia took up the whole wing of the hotel. The princes were very small, but their dignity of manner impressed all who were introduced to them. They looked as if they could say a world of wise and original things if the confusion of tongues had never fallen upon mankind.

"During Mr. Pierce's administration, Mr. Crampton, who was a well-bred man of some wit, a strong sense of humor, and sincerely liked by the society of Washington, was misled by his zeal for the interest of Great Britain, into conniving at the enlistment of Americans and foreigners in America, for service in the Crimean war, to fill up the foreign legions authorized by Great Britain at that time. The President's whole Cabinet felt so kindly towards him that they examined narrowly the evidence against Mr. Crampton, and would gladly have believed that he had been innocent of violating the neutrality of America toward the contending nations, but were at last unwillingly convinced of the fact. It was a grave matter that caused much acerbity between England and America; but, nevertheless, Mr. Crampton and three English consuls were given their congé as soon as the facts were undoubtedly established.

"The President was personally partial to Mr. Crampton, and it is difficult to perceive how, except from an irresponsi-

ble writer, ignorant of the truth, the Administration of President Pierce could have been accused of a desire to derive 'popularity,' or a new 'tenure of office,' from involving England and America in a war.

"Mr. Crampton was socially very acceptable to the 'American Statesman,' but the preservation of good faith in our treaties with other countries outweighed personal regard.

"Sometimes Captain Rodman came to see Mr. Davis at home; he was then perfecting his great gun. He was a rather thick-set, quiet man, of pleasant address and very gentlemanly manner, which was peculiarly acceptable to Mr. Davis. They talked of smooth bores and rifled bores, but I soon gave up trying to understand heavy artillery, as too scientific for an unlearned listener.

"Colonel Montgomery Meigs was charged with the extention of the Capitol, and was a frequent visitor. Mr. Davis detailed him for the work, and never had man a more generous, ardent defender than Colonel Meigs found in my husband throughout his whole term in the Cabinet and Senate; for there were many attacks made upon him which Mr. Davis always accepted and defended as personal, and he certainly merited a more grateful memory. . . . Mr. Davis also gave Colonel Meigs's son an appointment as cadet at West Point, and followed the course of the promising boy with anxious interest. He became an officer in the Federal Army and was killed in the usual course of war, not murdered as alleged, and our house was very sorrowful when his death was announced; he was 'little Johnnie Meigs' to us, a boy we had seen grow up, and for whose success we had many aspirations.

"Just before the termination of Mr. Davis's service in the Cabinet our second son, Jefferson, was born, and I was

ill unto death for many weeks. This was the year of the snow, when it drifted against the houses and in the streets to six feet in some places. On F Street it was so deep that Mrs. Henry Wayne, a dear friend and opposite neighbor, could not cross the street without the assistance of men to beat down the snow, and these could not be procured. Mr. Pierce was nearly an hour getting a square and a half, to inquire for me; he would not send a servant, for, said he, they have no personal interest to urge them on, and would never have made their way this far. He reached our house exhausted, having sunk above his waist several times.

"Mr. Seward heard that I was at the point of death, and that the lady, a near neighbor of his, who was nursing me with Mrs. Wayne, could not get a carriage to bring her to our door at the Corner of F and Fourteenth Street. Though he did not know us, he had his own fine horses harnessed to a sleigh, and brought Mrs. Hetzel to me—but with broken harness and at some peril. This service introduced him to us, and after all those long years of bitter feuds, I thank him as sincerely as my husband did to the last hour of his life."

The foregoing array of silhouette portraits are so clearly limned that were it not for the ease with which the lines are traced they would appear as if they had been drawn with a diamond upon glass. It was at this period and in this atmosphere that Varina come into her brightest and finest flower. One comparing her youthful portrait in this volume with Gainsborough's "Lady of Quality" is forcibly struck with the resemblance and can easily imagine that at this age she greatly resembled that famous picture. In later years, however, much to her regret, and some said chagrin, there was a tendency to too much stoutness.

CHAPTER XXXV

THIRTY-SIXTH CONGRESS. OLD ISSUES REVIVED

With the passage of time, the Secretary of War had witnessed the fine flower of his dreams ripen into abundant fruit. But although prosperity and progress were visible on every side, clumsy minds, in an honest but misdirected effort to rid society of an ancient evil, were still actively at work. The slavery question which had never slept with the abolitionists was again thrust forward in political circles, and a reform that many contend should have come as it had in other instances along with progress and social advancement and not as an incentive to war, was carried into legislative halls and upon political platforms to be accepted, in most instances, by politicians for selfish purposes. Even while Jefferson Davis was Secretary of War, Douglas, not dreaming of the bitter consequences, began his work in Congress that reopened the strife, seeking by an effort to destroy the Missouri Compromise to win the favor of the pro-slavery men for political purposes. Some have thought that they discovered sympathy at this time between Douglas and Jefferson Davis, but never was there as mere a figment of the imagination. While the Secretary of War favored some of the policies of Douglas, as did other Democrats, he had not the slightest influence in shaping that individual's political career.[1] That Douglas always did his own political maneuvering, eventually to get himself into a pretty box is evident.[2] He was brilliant,

[1] See Rowland's *Jefferson Davis, His Letters, Papers and Speeches.*

[2] The control of the new territory on the Pacific Slope was the real crux of the national controversy and Douglas thought to unite the Northern and Southern Democrats by a scheme of settling the West that would have eventually strengthened the Republican party much to the disgust of the South.

able and what might be called a statesman but he was a schemer who risked much to obtain his ends. Besides, the Secretary of War cared little for Douglas personally, and in time came to distrust his motives altogether. Still, there were other signs than the maneuvers of Douglas that the controversy, which now embraced threats of secession, was not in reality dead. Nor could Jefferson Davis have inspired the renewal of it as set forth in the *Richmond Dispatch* in the following: "If forced to go out of the Union the South can go with colors flying, with arms in her hands and with all the honors of war." This conservative organ might regain its poise tomorrow, but the spirit was there ever ready to leap into action. Neither could Jefferson Davis have dictated the shrill warning of the Charleston Mercury: "A bold attempt is even now on foot to deprive the South of every semblance of equality in the Union." Certainly no one without local influence could have shaped the destiny of this haughty people. No one man on the outside could have wielded such an influence in the old and aristocratic stronghold that boasted of being able to do its own thinking against the world.[1] Powerful and dominant as he was in Pierce's administration it would be sheer imagination to attribute to him the awakening of the spirit that seethed in these two expressions of the Southern press, a spirit that was slowly manifesting itself in a more or less degree in every community of the South. One day this spirit might cool, to in the next flame into a raging fire, and down too in the ranks of the masses, sometimes putting the politician of a demagogic type to his trumps to know which position in the national controversy to take.

Had he followed self interest rather than conviction during these years Jefferson Davis would in all probability have

[1] Charleston, S. C.

been sought for the Presidency, but this being the test he could never have been actuated by any other motive than the one of conviction. That this makes or does not make his claim to nobility of character a true one is a question that must be decided variously according to the ideal of the critic. Some aspiration to attain high place may have found passing lodgement in his mind but never, it could be said, after a close study of his nature and temperament at the expense of conviction nor that of his party's success. Wedded once to a conviction it was difficult for him to rid his mind of it. One cannot help believing that in Varina's thought, too, some such aspiration might have dwelt. Although there is no record that she was ever self-seeking, either for herself or for her husband, she very likely, as the years went by, aspired to the highest places, certainly she never looked about her long to see if there was room, but always seemed to believe that it was especially provided for her. In the Thirty-sixth Congress, she was often the central figure of a company of brilliant women in the galleries and halls of the Capitol. To be seen with Mrs. Jefferson Davis meant much to the timid new-comer in official circles and Varina always felt that it was her duty to take these helpless fledglings under her wing.

With the election of President Buchanan, old issues were beginning to be revived in Congress. Constitutional interpretations were again springing up and Jefferson Davis felt his longing for some definite settlement of the South's position growing stronger each day. His return to the Senate had been opposed by a considerable vote which indicated that he had not appealed to sectional feelings. Jacob Thompson, his opponent for that office in Mississippi—a shrewder politician in the common acceptation of that term and a rabid

secessionist had built up for himself a strong following in the State and it took some nice work on the part of the Davis constituency to withstand his influence. Secession, however, in any definite form was still a far off matter although the right of a state to secede under certain provocation was talked in both houses of Congress and a favorite topic of conversation on the street of Southern cities.

On his election to the Senate Jefferson Davis resigned from the Cabinet March 4, 1857, to take his seat once more in that body. Of his interview with the President on the occasion of his resignation, Varina says in her *Memoir*, that "President Pierce received his resignation, the first presented by any member of his Cabinet, and grasping his hand, said, 'I can scarcely bear the parting from you who have been strength and solace to me for four anxious years and have never failed me."

It was along with such distinguished members as Seward, Douglas, Crittenden, and Toombs that Jefferson Davis again went back into the Senate taking Varina again into the life to which she had grown accustomed. "Brierfield" and its flower yards and orchards, the appeal of the wide open country spaces, the fascination of the river by now were fading and growing dimmer for her, their hold upon her growing weaker each day. So much had come into her life to crowd out these first tastes and aspirations. But while she had lost the finer flavor of the simple life in the new atmosphere, she would always feel its influence, would always thrill at the sight of growing fields and gardens.

In addition to her own family she continued to keep with her her young sister Maggie who was nearing young ladyhood, and in the various social activities of her sister she took much pleasure and interest. The two young brothers also

were still under her guardianship, Beckett at school in Alexandria, Virginia, and Jeff in a boys school in Washington. This with the care of her own children and a continued interest in her husband's public affairs made a very full life for her. In society she was regarded as a favorite, being very handsome and attractive and, what most people insisted, a beautiful woman. In the first rank of official social circles and thoroughly versed in all the social customs of the day, life was for her one full of variety and color.

Her friends sometimes said of her that being so well favored it was not necessary for her to be as concerned about her appearance as the less attractive woman. Often a simple white linen with nothing more than a pretty pin at her throat or a rose or camelia in her hair, a style of adornment of which she was fond, was sufficient to set off in a pleasing way the smooth, glowing face and graceful figure. She was a contemporary said, in those days, before the iron had entered her soul, joyous and sweet, and always the very best company, her spontaneity and zest creating an atmosphere that few could resist."[1]

They had lived in Washington nearly all of her married life, had lived little of it elsewhere, and her acquaintance with its people was large, her home, now one of the most elaborate in the city, a pleasant and inviting one both to the constant caller and the chance visitor. Among the distinguished members of the Senate, William H. Seward, by an act of thoughtful kindness had piqued her curiosity, giving her a desire to know him better. So far she had not known, personally, the distinguished Senior Senator from New

[1] Mrs. Harriet B. Kells. Mrs. Kells was now old enough to remember Mrs. Davis. During her visit South she says that she wore white linen and muslin very often, this being a favorite style of dress with her during the summer.

York and she wished very much to give some expression of her appreciation of his kindness during her severe illness. The opportunity soon presented itself and her *Memoir* reveals a friendship between the families that seems genuinely pathetic in view of what was to follow. Varina and her husband were very responsive to the civilities and courteous attentions of others, of party friends and equally so of their political opponents, and their ready and sincere appreciation of such was in some part the secret of their popularity with the large contingent in Congress who opposed them in public questions.

There was little either in the social or the private life of the Capitol that escaped Varina's observant eye during these days. In a description of the inauguration of President Buchanan she gives us this interesting reminiscence: "The city was full to overflowing; the President-elect was expected to stay at the old National Hotel, three squares from the Capitol; but, fortunately, went to Willard's Hotel. However, great numbers of the leading men from all quarters of the country came to the National to consult with Mr. Buchanan on the many points of interest which were then at issue. In some mysterious way (it was suggested by some that the water had stood in the lead pipes too long) all who partook of food or drink there for two weeks or more were poisoned. At first it was bruited abroad that an effort had been made to poison the incoming President and his Cabinet, that he was only saved by the chance of his going to another hotel, etc.; but at last the lead poison was ascertained to be a fact, and the excitement quieted down, but the accident plunged many families into mourning. Mississippi lost a gallant soldier, a faithful advocate, and useful citizen from this cause, General John Anthony Quitman, and she

mourned him with a deep sense of his rare moral qualities and great civil and military services.[1]

"The day of the inauguration I went to Willard's Hotel parlor to see the procession, and Mr. Buchanan, Mr. Cass, and Governor Marcy came to speak to me. I was much impressed with Mr. Buchanan's kind, deferential manner, and the friendly way in which he inquired for Mr. and Mrs. Pierce. He was gracious because he felt kindly. After the ceremony, Mr. and Mrs. Pierce returned at once to Concord and resumed the course of their former quiet and uneventful lives. In the summer, Mr. and Mrs. Pierce and Nathaniel Hawthorne made the tour through Europe of which Hawthorne, in his published diaries, wrote so charmingly."

[1] Gen. Quitman was a native of New York. He led the American forces in the capture of the City of Mexico, and was appointed its first governor; was Governor of Mississippi, 1850-51, and was a man of decided ability and possessed much personal charm.

CHAPTER XXXVI

SECESSION RAISES ITS HEAD

Touch as lightly as one would like to do in this volume upon the grave political problems and differences that were overtaking the country, it is impossible to escape from giving some definite outline of these in a biography of one so closely related to one of the main—partisans contend the chief, actor in the wide dissension of party leaders, dissension which none dreamed would end in secession. It is not, however, as had been stated, the purpose here to follow Jefferson Davis in more than outline through these years of his service in the National Congress, years in which daily, even hourly, the burning question of States' Rights and all questions involved therein were being fiercely debated. The main root of the controversy in its deeper and subtler sense was over the future disposition, or rather, political government of the vast western territory, control of which was eagerly sought by leaders of the two political parties. It was suspected by the Republican Party—a name that had grown out of the old Whig and Free Soil parties of the North—that the Southern Democrats not alone on account of political control wished to extend the institution of slavery westward, but for mere interest and pride in it as an institution. This, while not especially offensive to the politician, was bitterly resented by the abolitionist. With Jefferson Davis the controversy had a further appeal besides the pivotal one of States' Rights as provided for and se-

cured by the Constitution of the United States. To him it was the great West, a region that he had served with such devotion as to make it something to guard and protect, a region not only to marvel about but to possess and develop. The tourist from the well ordered lanes of England, the Sunday peace of Salisbury Plains, or the easy life of London, might see in it a region unfit for the habitation of man, but to his eyes, familiar with its austere but prophetic outlines, it possessed a varied resource and hidden treasure which would sustain a civilization, that would rival any in the east. No man in the public life of that period had the welfare of the West more at heart than Jefferson Davis. To him it seemed a veritable Land of Promise, and for its development through great railroads and its protection during the pioneer stage he had always contended with a fierce energy and powerful argument that charmed at times his bitterest adversaries. Its destiny was now at disposal. Would it be Northernized or Southernized—Republicanized or Democratized? Its sponsor and advocate—more, its intimate friend and lover since his early manhood—he was jealous of its future, resentful of it being dominated by institutions and conditions other than that of his own section. These, however, must be in keeping with the guarantees, restrictions and privileges of the National Constitution, of which he had made a fetich. He asked no more than what it conferred, but that much he would contend for to the bitter end.

His was largely of the Jefferson brand and type of democracy, with a plea as strong for the rights of the separate states as that of Hamilton's for centralized power. With him the Constitution was a legal bond a sacred compact, if that word meant more, between the various states of the

Union, the disregard of which left its members free to follow their own devices. To the very reverse of Hamilton, he was in thorough accord and harmony with all its provisions, eager to abide by any restrictions it held and just as eager for every privilege it extended. Though not as subtle and as much a strategist as Jefferson, he was for anything more determined to sustain his contention. Had he lived at an earlier period, it is a certain guess that he would have had something to do with laying the foundations of the American Republic. At the present his voice was one that drew instant attention.

Each day the congressional debates grew more intense until finally every discussion involved some infringement or else the ignoring of some vital principle of the fundamental and organic law of the Republic. The abolition of slavery in some quarters rose above all others. Sleeping, or rather, seemingly so for a time the New England reformers were constantly on duty. John Quincy Adams was no more, but they found others to present their petitions and Adams had not been more persistent than these. He little dreamed, when as far back as the 30's he was constantly urging Congress to take some cognizance of the anti-slavery petitions with which he was daily being deluged, how persistent party leaders would be come in future. The grandsons of grandfathers who had been slaveholders were reaching out for a newer regeneracy than had been attained by their immediate ancestors in this particular instance and, as reformers have ever done the world over, were eager to hasten on the good work at any cost. Where there is little sacrifice, or self-interest at stake, in social movements of any kind these more readily gather supporters. The North was independent of the institution, the South wholly dependent upon it. Still,

there were main considerations, that the historian seeking for truth will not ignore. Southern leaders, among them Jefferson Davis, were already on record in defense of the institution as a divine blessing to the slave during his transition as a race from savagery, but with the express hope and expectation of a higher destiny for him in future.[1] By 1858 with the renewal of old issues that would not down and which, in the matter of slavery, had from a Southern standpoint the approbation of the Supreme Court, every outburst of feeling that men in public life were capable of had taken place in both houses of Congress. In the Senate Jefferson Davis was the outstanding champion of a strict construction of the Constitution, believing that the preservation of the principles of that instrument was all that was necessary to the well being and the permanency of the American Union. To this end irrespective of the question of slavery he labored. He was of a tenacious and unyielding spirit in his conception of the right and wrong of any question. No half right would ever, in his eyes, withstand wrong. Others might writhe and conjecture over his rigid conceptions and interpretations of certain questions of government, but Varina, who was closer to him, had learned that, as gentle and yielding as he could be in unimportant matters, in matters that involved the truths that he had discovered and tested, he was inflexible, even adamantean. He had not dispelled her first opinion of him formed when scarcely more than a child which was that he seemed to expect others to agree with him,—but she had discovered, on a closer association, that it was not for the mere sake of self-dominancy that he adhered so strictly to his

[1] *A Memoir*, Vol. I. Part of debate on the Oregon Question delivered in the Thirtieth Congress.

views and expected others to accept them. His opinions and policies with which he happily combined the visionary and romantic with the actual, and substantial, were the outcome of long study and agreement with such minds as Jefferson's and Calhoun's which were believed by students of Democracy to reflect the best concept of government for mankind. Out of this he constructed a philosophy and political theory that left untrammeled would have in all probability brought to the nation another influence much like that of Jefferson. In the matter of secession with such freedom of action as he had enjoyed in military affairs, and as Secretary of War, for which he had shown a happy genius, there is a possibility that he would have triumphed in the establishment of a Southern Confederacy. Jefferson was not so gifted in leadership but possessed more strategy, skill and ingeniousness, if we may not say craft in handling men, and the divergence sets in at this point, for craft nor anything synonymous of it Jefferson Davis had not. In all other respects he was much like his illustrious name sake—a dreamer who sought to combine in any accomplishment the invisible and intangible good with the actual and substantial. To Varina who had now begun herself to hold many of his views and opinions, he was a worthy standard bearer of such august prototypes as Jefferson and Calhoun. What more could she ask? She had, under his influence, difficult as it had been at times, discarded the Hamiltonian theory of government. The Whigs had been bequeathed a fine flavor of it, and she had been tutored by a famous Massachusetts Whig who, if not Jefferson and Calhoun's, scorned *in toto* Andrew Jackson's political doctrine and methods. But now the Whig's detestation of Andrew Jackson had to a large extent been effaced from her mind, and she heard with a

spirit of approval the vindication of many phases of his rough democracy given forth in more measured words and tones by Jefferson Davis. Though aristocratic in nurture, she grew to be democratic in theory and in many tastes, and had always been "satirically contemptuous of pretenders and parvenues who disclaimed the simpler things of life."[1] Those who in later years in jealous mood accused her of snobbery knew little of her upbringing, early environment, and ample opportunities for culture of the best sort. There was as little cause for Varina Howell being a snob as there was for Victoria or her own kinswoman, Theodosia Burr, both of whom she excelled in mental culture.

At this time Varina was beginning to have definite worries and trials. Her husband was criticized a great deal in these days, and while she felt that his critics at the same time honored and respected him, even admired him, she grew restive under the continual censure and attacks.

The questions were not now confined to the usual bickerings of parties but a vast schism in governmental policy had crystalized and, where one party reaped large advantages on account of its anti-slavery platform, the other must fight for its existence or yield to the inevitable. The Republicans fell heir to the spirit of reform abroad in the land, a reform that in all certainty would have continued as a social and bloodless one had not the future political control of the new territories been involved in it. Although the abolition movement had already had a long and prominent history and, still stands out on the written page from the standpoint of many Northern historians as the cause of the Southern revolt, forever must stand as a refutation the clear-cut announcement of the shrewd and subtle Seward, who had his finger on the public pulse, that before the North would fight the

[1] Col. Charles E. Hooker.

government would have to change the word *slavery* to that of *union*. Boston, too, the center of American thought, had expressed itself in no uncertain terms that it was tired of the agitation, and Northern soldiers in many states would not enlist under its banner. During the invasion of the South, hundreds of Union soldiers expressed themselves as fighting to preserve the Union. Among numberless instances of the same nature is a humorous little story told of a great bearded Hessian, who on being remonstrated with by a Southern woman for some act of vandalism, blurted forth, "Wad fer den did you break up de Union?"

That the abolition movement was a potent influence in the election of Lincoln is clear, but voting was one thing and war was another. It is a safe conclusion that if the Republicans could have controlled the future political representation of the New Territory without the abolition movement, they would have thought little of it except in individual instances. Having once seized upon it for an issue politicians continued to keep it in the lime light in their discussions of questions that involved political representation and used it for a number of decades to excuse much of the error and wrong of political methods.

There is no disposition on our part to condemn the abolition reform. Its purpose was good, but its willingness to become the weapon of the politician was hideous. The method was already creating hate and despair in the hearts of a people united by every bond that made a people one. The severance would be like cutting in two the Siamese Twins, but the knife was poised and there were none quick enough to stay the descending blow.

In the winter of 1858 matters had reached such an acute stage in political circles that social relations were soon feel-

ing the strain. Varina had been among the happiest in the social life about her, especially were the years of her husband's War Ministry years to be remembered as white milestones. With an ease, a natural gaiety and cordiality that cannot be long sustained sincerely except by those of a kindly, responsive nature, she had welcomed the coterie of intellectuals her husband had gathered about him and had helped to brighten and bind the bonds closer between them. Though of what was recognized as members of the aristocratic circles, all classes of society found an entrance into their home.[1] There was scarcely a week in which some contingent, either male or female, from the home State, even when many of these had grown tiresome—the bore or the unfortunate, as the case might be, was not put up with by the naturally kind and affable wife. However, it must be set down against her, whether to her advantage or disadvantage, on several occasions she protested at "the house being always overrun with," what she poutingly termed, "Tom, Dick, and Harry." Nevertheless she continued to be kind, laughing and agreeing with her husband in the downright righteousness of the thing.

With as fine if not better control of her impulses and with more charity perhaps than at a later period of life, until long suffering and wisdom had given her back these qualities, Varina faced the trials multiplying in her life. Taking her point of view, she says, largely from her husband, she observed a well-bred, cordial intercourse with people of all opinions and classes, during these days, unsettled and disordered beyond power of description. Social relations, drawing their coloring from the stormy political skies, were now nearing the breaking point. At first in social circles, by a tacit understanding, all subjects about which the two

[1] Col. Charles E. Hooker.

sections disagreed were left alone. But, though outwardly the kindliest relations were maintained, beneath the rather too much glazed artificial surface a something flashed out at times that made people jump when in close proximity to it. Too often a quick, hostile light crept into the eyes of people that scorched its way, like a stroke of lightning, straight across a table or a drawing-room. The restraint grew and tightened daily until at last a stiff ceremonious manner was maintained that one dared not lay aside for fear of some dreaded *finale*. But not until it was forced upon them had the happy coteries of congenial spirits been willing to see their pleasant teas and dinners marred by scowling faces. New territory, slavery, States Rights, Constitutional clauses, and all problems involved therein were red rags that only the toreadors now knew how to wave in the face without bringing out the full strength of the bull. Better, painful silence. As the days passed, however, and the debates in Congress grew more violent and personal, all the courtesies and amenities of social life were cast aside. The rudeness that marked all conversation and discussion by opposing political parties grew even more aggressive and less restrained at times in social life than is public debate. Washington was about equally divided in sentiment on the leading political questions before Congress—the scales tilting Southward on many occasions, and the hotels, especially the boarding houses and eating places, were hot beds of controversy. Intemperate men and women grew not only denunciatory of leaders but of the South and its people. The Southern representation in the Capital responded with a resentment as fierce and unrestrained, always feeling that the attacked had a right to defend themselves. Varina had not come of a stolid race,

nor was she unacquainted with political methods, but much study and training under the well-balanced and deeply philosophical mind of her New England tutor supplemented by a more delicate, fine and sensitive culture that she had daily received from her husband, had taught her the advantage of self control and poise. The Kempes, and to a large extent the Howells, had been of a fiery breed, and her mother had even confided to a friend that she hoped her children would be like the Grahams. "Don't lose your temper"—"Don't be self-opionated" had been, Varina says, cautioned by her parents and her faithful "Great Heart" all through her youth. But who totally lives down his or her natal inheritance she could have asked her tutors. Still, though she might in future acquire something of it, for she came to live in a day and to contend with circumstances that could but develop the trait, she had not so far grown self-assertive in public matters. Her husband, who instinctively knew the value of self-command and poise, had been largely her mentor in all such matters as deportment in political circles. She herself preferred the lighter, airier and more brilliant forms of social intercourse, where her *bon mot* flashed and sparkled, coming at times dangerously near to satire, to be excused only in the deep good humor that must have an outlet in a naturally humorous temperament. Social life at this period was making a stronger appeal to her each day. To be the center of attraction in a drawing-room, an agreeable and entertaining hostess,—these were the things she was beginning to value. But with this feminine propensity she understood public affairs better than most women of her day, and in certain moods discussed them with a zest relished by such subtle minds as Seward's. To the discomfiture of her critics she gave way to the humorous vein that she could not quite

conquer at times, and feel as she might about the rights of her section, she could still, even at this juncture of the Nation's quarrel, laugh a little at the overseriousness of both parties, a mood that her husband, she says, sometimes gently rebuked, although the things she laughed at were so patent he often joined her.[1] The natural joyousness of her nature meant much to him through life. The man who does not find it at his fireside rarely ever feels really warm.

But Varina as happy as she in the main had been was not without cares and unforeseen misfortunes. It was during these days that her husband, who frequently contended with spells of ill health, suffered severe eye trouble caused by a case of laryngitis. Her reminiscences of this time not only give a tender picture of her deep solicitude for him, but clearly reveal the vast good will that still existed between the great leaders of the nation, who were at the same time so far apart in their views of public policy. The ease with which these entered the homes of one another at this period in times of sickness and misfortune is well worth preserving in a nation's history.

That Jefferson Davis should fail in health at this particular high peak of his contention brings to mind the sad fortune of Woodrow Wilson, but there must have been something about the Davises deeply magnetic and compelling, since their adversaries clung to them with the same devotion felt by their friends at this critical stage of the husband's health. The winter of 1858-9 was one of bitter controversy in congressional circles. Still the Davis home was sought by both Democrats and Republicans while the great leader of the States' Rights forces lay ill for weeks. "In the midst of the heat and excitement of the session," she wrote, "my husband caught a severe cold, which gave him laryngitis and

[1] Conversations with contemporaries.

before this subsided the left eye became intensely inflamed." He had suffered spells of it several times in the past at "Brierfield" and in Washington, but this attack seems to have been of a more serious nature than any heretofore. "He lay," she says, "speechless and blind—only able to communicate his thoughts by feeling for the slate and writing them, more or less intelligibly, for four weeks. About this time there was a Congress of medical men in Washington, and fortunately our dear friend and family physician, Dr. Thomas Miller, brought the great specialist, Dr. Hayes, of Philadelphia, to see our poor sufferer, though he had been previously ably attended also by Dr. William Stone, of the District. Mr. Davis's anguish was intense—a procedenture of the pupil had taken place, and the eye was in imminent danger of bursting. My husbands fortitude and self-control had been so great that no one but I knew how much he suffered, and I only because one day I begged him to try to take nourishment, and he gave only one smothered scream and wrote, 'I am in anguish, I cannot.' While they examined the eye Mr. Davis sat in the room which had the full morning light streaming through it, that the doctors might see its condition. Dr. Hayes turned to me as I stood holding the emaciated hand that wrung mine at every pang, and said, 'I do not see why this eye has not burst.' My husband felt for the slate and wrote, 'My wife saved it.' All the triumphs of my life were and are concentrated in and excelled by this blessed memory. He sat patiently until the examinations were over, without a word of remonstrance, and was taken nearly fainting back to bed. Dr. Hayes asked me if he was never irritable—and remarked 'such patience surpasses that of man, it is godlike.' There he lay, silent, uncomplaining, anxious to save everyone trouble, and most concerned about

my little brother, Jefferson Davis Howell, who was ill with scarlet fever in the room above. As soon as Mr. Davis could speak he insisted on going up to him. When I objected because he had never had the disease, he watched the opportunity of my absence and had himself led upstairs.

"On my return he was sitting close by the child, whispering, for he could not speak yet aloud, bear stories to him with his arm under the little man's head, looking as happy as he. This boy was the pride of his later years and the object of his tender affection, until our brother's gallant deeds swept him in to the blessed immortality he so well earned. My brother was baptized at a time when Mr. Davis was supposed to be mortally wounded in Mexico, Jefferson Davis—and none more worthy will ever again bear that honored name.

"During Mr. Davis's two months confinement to the dark room," she continues, "men of all politics came to him with a personal affection most charming. Colonel Edwin V. Sumner, a stout-hearted, tender preux chevalier of the old régime, who, when promotion was to have been expected at Secretary Davis's hands, never made any pretence of leaning toward Southern opinions, would sit in almost total darkness and talk matters, explorations, Indians, anything by which he thought he could lighten the tedium of these gloomy hours —and often holding Mr. Davis's hand with the tenderness of a woman. The brave old Colonel came to Washington intent upon 'having satisfaction' from General Harney, for a discourtesy he thought had been done to him, and asked Colonel Hardie to be his friend in the altercation; and in the course of his conversation with Mr. Davis, which was carried on through me, my husband inquired, 'You do not want to fight, of course, but to have this matter explained and the

wrong acknowledged.' 'Well, I do not know,' said the old gentleman, 'I rather think I prefer fighting.' It was, however, happily settled without resort to violent measures. Colonel Hardie, too, came very often, and sat reading and writing for him when I had driven out for fresh air for an hour. The English minister at that time was Lord Napier, afterward Governor of India. He, too, used to come like a healthy, tender boy, and brought a reminiscence of sunshine and cheer with him—to Mr. Davis's bedside. He had hardly reached middle age, was a most presentable man in appearance; his manners were a singular compromise between those of the English and French. Lord Napier was much more approachable than Englishmen in his position generally are, was quick to appreciate every social exigence, and sympathetic as a boy; he had a certain empressement of manner like a Frenchman, with a blunt kind of self-respecting English honesty that put finesse to fault. He liked most people, and was too kind-hearted to show the opposite feeling when it existed. Hundreds still remember his gracious life among us, and he and his lovely wife, one of the most charming and holy women of her day, as well as one of the most accomplished, are enshrined in many hearts as memories that are precious possessions. The President, Mr. Buchanan, paid Lady Napier a compliment on her farewell visit before leaving the embassy, that was gratifying to every woman in society, and evinced his power of saying, upon the moment, as graceful things as Talleyrand. For some unaccountable reason Lord Napier had been recalled suddenly, Mr. Buchanan assured me that he had no idea why. Everyone in society felt the recall a personal grievance, and some of the English legation believed that the President or Secretary of State had intimated

that another minister would be more acceptable. So great was the sympathy and regard for the retiring minister, that his friends gave him a large ball at Willard's, which was attended by the good society of all the neighboring cities. During their last official visit, just as Lord and Lady Napier were making their adieux, the President bent his stately head over Lady Napier's hand and gravely said, 'Madam, I have holy writ to substantiate my warning that you are in imminent danger.' She looked startled, and he added: 'Beware when all men speak well of you.' No English minister and his wife that I have known were ever so beloved as were Lord and Lady Napier in Washington.

"Mr. Seward came for an hour daily, and sometimes oftener, to tell the 'passing show' of the Senate and House of Representatives. One of his favorite expressions when recounting a debate was, 'Your man out-talked ours, you would have liked it, but I didn't.' He inquired about every symptom, and one day when our hopes of saving the eye were small, as he went downstairs he suddenly said, with moist eyes—'I could not bear to see him maimed or disfigured, he is a splendid embodiment of manhood, he must not lose his eye.' There was an earnest, tender interest in his manner which was unmistakably genuine, and thus I thought of him when he lay wounded unto death, when war had almost obliterated the pleasant memories of years gone by.

"It was on one of these visits that he said a most remarkable thing to me. We were speaking of the difficulty men generally had in doing themselves justice, if not cheered on by the attention and sympathy of the audience. Mr. Davis remarked, 'I lose much of the vigor of my thoughts when the audience is inattentive or seems "ill at ease."' Mr.

Seward said, 'I do not, it is rather a relief to me to speak to empty benches.' I exclaimed, 'Then, whom do you impersonate?' 'The papers,' said he, 'I speak to the papers, they have a larger audience than I, and can repeat a thousand times if need be what I want to impress upon the multitude outside; and then there is also the power to pin my antagonists down to my exact words, which might be disputed if received orally.'

"Another day he began to talk on the not infrequent topic among us, of slavery. Heartily liking him, and taking a good many liberties of expression with him I said, 'Mr. Seward, how can you make, with a grave face those piteous appeals for the negro that you did in the Senate; you were too long a schoolmaster in Georgia to believe the things you say?' He looked at me quizzically, and smilingly answered, 'I do not, but these appeals, as you call them, are potent to affect the rank and file of the North.' Mr. Davis said, very much shocked at Mr. Seward's answer, 'But, Mr. Seward, do you never speak from conviction alone?' 'Nev-er,' answered he. Mr. Davis raised up his blindfolded head, and with much heat whispered, 'As God is my judge, I never spoke from any other motive.' Mr. Seward put his arm about him and gently laid down his head, saying, with great tenderness, 'I know you do not—I am always sure of it.' "

Her husband, she continues, "grew slowly better, the unimpaired eye cleared, his throat had been for some time pretty well; Mr. Seward came daily until the day Mr. Davis was taken in a close carriage up to address the Senate on an appropriation for the coast survey. Mr. Seward and I both objected earnestly, but Mr. Davis said, 'It is for the good of the country and for my boyhood friend, Dallas Bache, and I must go if it kills me.' He left me at the door of the wait-

ing room with beef-tea and wine in a little basket and went in—carried his point, then came almost fainting home. From that time he began to slide back into his accustomed place for an hour or two each day, and convalescence had its gentle and perfect work. After many weeks Mr. Seward said he might, with the practice of a *raconteur* he had acquired, have grown to the height of a second book nearly equal to Mr. Benton's 'Thirty Years in the Senate,' had his short digests of its acts not been interrupted by 'this unlucky convalescence.' I met him looking very bored once on the street, and he stopped and said, 'I think Mr. Davis must get sick again, I miss my daily walks.' So powerful was the attraction by husband's elevated character and graceful deference for others exercised over the most prejudiced of his antagonists.

"Mr. Seward" she observes with an aptitude for portraiture, "was a problematical character full of contradictions, but a very attractive study to us. He was thoroughly sympathetic with human suffering, and would do most unexpected kindnesses to those who would have anticipated the opposite only. He frankly avowed that truth should be held always subsidiary to an end, and if some other statement could subserve that end he made it. He said, again and again, that political strife was a state of war, and in war all strategems were fair."

CHAPTER XXXVII

A SUMMER IN NEW ENGLAND

VARINA had at this time become uneasy about her husband's health which had been much impaired by his recent illness. The heavy strain of constant public service in which he had spent himself freely was telling on him. She also was feeling the tension induced by anxiety on account of his health and the many demands of a wide social circle which had broadened considerably with their Cabinet days. The care of her two small children, Maggie and Jefferson, had never been left entirely to the nurse. Her time was entirely taken up. Society was demanding more of her each year. Although she—rather ruefully—refers to the necessity on this account of much inattention to their private affairs on the part of the wives of the public officials, she could never bring herself to the point of neglecting her family, neglect her housekeeping as she admitted she was sometimes compelled to do.

Since the birth of her youngest child Jefferson, at which time she suffered a severe illness, she had recovered much of her usual vigor. The faint bluish circle around her large dark eyes while it enhanced their beauty increased the tinge of sadness noticeable in after years. Still, she had retained her youth, and in her early thirties, there was that about her, in her carriage and in her marked elasticity and radiancy of spirit, that instantly suggested a sound mind in a sound body.

Jefferson Davis, his physician insisted, needed a rest and

change, and with the desire to escape the heated season in Washington he decided upon a summer outing with his family through the New England States. In addition to the bracing climate they so much needed there were numerous associations that linked them with the people of the more Northern section of the Union. Among the early settlers in and about Natchez and along the Mississippi there had been a colony of the Lymans and Dwights from Connecticut and many others of prominence from that section. Varina too had heard much of the New England region—especially of Masaschusetts, from her tutor who she said was at his best in describing some particular advantage or characteristic of the State. So often had she as a child listened to such panegyrics that, she says, on one occasion becoming peeved at some comparison of the two States she looked up sullenly from her book and blurted out, "Then why didn't you stay in Boston?"[1]

But this able jurist was not all of the Puritan spirit that had mixed with the population of the wealthy Cavalier aristocracy in the old colonial region of the State; Massachusetts had sent Winthrop Sargent down to be its first governor and to die and be buried there. There is little in all the State more picturesque than his small family graveyard in which the body of Seargent S. Prentiss said to be related to him is also buried. Scarcely a State in the New England group but what had contributed some of their best strains to this portion of the State gradually to become "more Southernized," it was humorously said, than the natives themselves. Many such thoughts kept recurring to Varina and her husband as they prepared for their journey. She was extremely alert and responsive to new environments and

[1] Conversations with descendants of contemporaries.

sensations of any nature, and the prospect thrilled her. Though having to a large extent the personal care of her children she set out upon the tour with keen zest and many anticipations of the pleasures awaiting them for the summer. "Always," her intimate friends and associates avered, "a woman worth knowing and one that few once having known would ever forget" she was during these years of her life very attractive.

Notwithstanding her inclination to gayety and the unconcern the word usually implies her sympathies were warm and deep. She entered freely into the trials and sorrows of those about her; her husband, her sisters and brothers, her children and friends were objects of a solicitude and care full of an exquisite tenderness. One has only to read her letters to her relatives and friends to realize the wealth of affection she lavished upon others. As the years went by she grew to be very sociable, liked a crowd about her but never to the extent of putting aside her family. If it must be recorded of her that she possessed something of the foibles and vanities common to her sex it must at the same time be recorded that she was well grounded in the accepted virtues. In matters of right and wrong she had faith enough in herself. Also, her God was a real one whom she had with her constantly, especially as a bulwark in times of great distress and misfortune, and of Him she was never uncertain. Though her spirtual emotions continued to be lively in the deeper sense, she was not given to any display which took the form of sanctimoneousness. With the people of her day and section she delighted in biblical quotations and applications, and her memory for remembering such, was good. These were not on occasions spoken as reverently as the *pious* of her time thought they should have been, but

flashed forth at times in a manner savoring of humor. Her brothers and sisters sometimes said of her that, "If people didn't know that Sister was the best woman in the world they would think she was not religious." But these knew she was "religious" in its best sense and depended on her at every turn of family affairs. Her father confided to her mother, that though he did not say it because she was his child, "Varina is one of the best women in the world."[1]

There were no Gorgon faces staring at her at this period of her life. She was not given to much useless regret, complaint of the present, nor prognostication of the future, but accepted the best life had to offer as she found it from day to day, forgetting even the strife and dissonance left behind in public affairs in anticipation of her summer outing. Little had befallen her in the way of misfortune with the exception of the loss of her first child. Her grief had been severe at the time, and she still sorrowed, but other children had come to satisfy her longing for motherhood. With a zest that communicated itself to the delicate, half invalid husband she got them all ready for the journey North, with her own hands assisting the nurse with the packing, and careful that everything was included for their various needs. Life for her was very full and complete. She was happy and contented in the sphere that they had made for themselves, and one can believe that she would have been equally so at the Brierfield home, where she herself had helped with unusual good taste to install the white marble mantles in the reception rooms and had personally supervised many of the details during the construction of the new house. But other things than "Brierfield" now filled her thought.[2]

[1] Conversations with descendants of contemporaries.

[2] Conversations with Mrs. H. B. Kells. For a full description of the new house built on the Brierfield plantation see records in the Mississippi Historical Society.

Local color is reflected in actual experience that can rarely be reproduced and the following delightful account of their tour through the New England States given in her *Memoir* will be used in continuation of her story:

"Mr. Davis" she records "still continued so weak and had so little appetite that our medical man ordered him to a higher latitude for a month or two after the adjournment of Congress. So we took our two little children, Margaret and Jefferson, and embarked on a steamer from Baltimore for Boston. It was not a pleasant route, but Mr. Davis always improved at sea, and in this case he became much stronger; until, when we arrived at Boston, he was quite cheerful, and able to dispense with the shade over his eyes for some hours toward twilight. We made connection with the packet steamer at Boston, and sailed out again for Portland harbor. The Fourth of July fell upon one of the days we were on the ship, and there were prayers read and several speeches. Among those who made addresses was Mr. Davis. He spoke very urgently for peace, and of his devotion to the Constitutional Union. Every one present was stirred by his remarks, and showed the pleasure he had given by renewed attentions.

"We found in Portland a charming summer climate. The excursions on Casco Bay, in the little boats that plied to and fro, were delightful. It was cheering to meet occasionally a pleasure party of several hundred, singing as they sailed some old-fashioned hymn. Even now, 'Praise God from whom all blessings flow' comes floating over the past from those many voices, and I can almost see the green little islands rise before me that dot Casco Bay. The people of Portland were as kind as our own could have been, and we met many old acquaintances and made some agreeable new

ones. Mrs. Montgomery Blair's family, many of them, lived there; Mrs. Charles Wingate, a bright, cordial, and stately lady of the old régime; the Dearborns, and Mr. Charles Clapp and his agreeable wife and daughter, entertained profusely in their delightful homes built before the embargo. Mrs. Carroll bore a strong resemblance to her cousin, Mrs. Blair, in person and in temperament, and was a near neighbor; she was kind as she was charming and unaffected. The Honorable Mr. Bradbury and his gentle, kind wife did much to render our visit pleasant. The families of Mr. Muzzy, Colonel Little, and Mr. and Mrs. Shepley—he was afterwards General Shepley during the war—were very kind, and Mr. Davis remembered them always affectionately. Clam-bakes were arranged for his amusement, and evenings at home for me, at different charming houses in the town; but, most pleasant of all, were the basket parties at Cape Elizabeth, where we sat down to exquisite refreshments, cooked under the directions of the ladies of the city, where each dish was *chef-d'œuvre* of some good housekeeper. At one of these parties, when we were all seated at the table, a young man with a salver, white apron, and napkin handed me some very good cake, but as I went to take a piece, he upset the whole plate on my shoulders, and then ejaculated, 'Oh, I beg your pardon, I am so very awkward.' As I looked into the blushing face, I answered, 'It is of no consequence; you have had no practice.' He retired in confusion, and in a few minutes Colonel Shepley brought in my friend, the awkward servant, metamorphosed into a handsome young gentleman, who was profuse in his apologies, but said he had heard Mr. Davis would make a speech after tea, and had asked to be allowed to attend the table rather than miss hearing it. He was there on a fishing excursion.

As the evening progressed he added much to our pleasure by singing, in a beautiful tenor voice, many popular songs. As the dark settled upon us, we drove home, admiring with 'awful joy' the splendid comet that flaunted across the sky that summer.

"Our little Maggie" she continues, "was a beautiful child, of restless activity, and was the light of her father's eyes. She could not be kept in the old-fashioned garden planted with white, red and black currants in rows under wide-spreading apple-trees, but whenever it was possible would run off to the neighbors, where her brave little spirited ways always made her welcome. She knew everyone in the neighborhood. One old sea-captain used to tell her wonderful stories upon which she dreamed at night, and the sea-serpent was her familiar demon. Not infrequently I heard people in the street designate me as 'Little Maggie's mother.'

"We met in Portland the Rev. Starr King and the Rev. Mr. Stebbins, two great pulpit orators. Mr. Starr King boarded at the same house with us, and his nature and mind combined seemed to me to be a heavenly lyre that was capable of sounding any note in the gamut of joy or sympathy. His eloquence was wondrous, and his cordial grace commended it to us. Mr. Stebbins was also personally most agreeable to Mr. Davis. They had several long talks upon doctrinal points, and once at a dinner, when the necessity of a formulated creed was urged by my husband, Mr. Stebbins argued against it, and said, 'The creed I set before my congregation is one-third democracy and two-thirds pluck.'

"Happy in the society of intellectual men of bright minds and cordial manners, Mr. Davis hourly improved, and found here entire rest and recreation. We were invited to witness the annual commencement of the Portland Free High School,

and there saw the daughter of a dissipated, ignorant washerwoman, pass a wonderful examination. She had forgotten the prescribed method of explaining a problem in differential calculus, and formulated one of her own which answered the purpose, thereby showing her clear understanding of the science rather than of the words of the textbooks. As we went home we questioned whether this education, given to her by the State, had not rendered her more sensible, not of the degradation of labor, because education should elevate the dignity of self-help, but of the squalor of her surroundings, and the inequality with hers of her mother's cultivation; if this made her more impatient under the daily scenes which mortified and tortured her; and finally, whether an energetic, cheery working woman had not been spoiled and a learned nondescript substituted for a wholesome, admirable, natural object. Mr. Davis and I felt such sympathy for the poor child that we seriously considered taking her home with us; but when we began to cast about for her proper level in our household we found that, as she had the habits of her class, we could not put her on the social plane of our family, and the learning of a scholar rendered her equally unfit for association with servants. So our project was reluctantly abandoned. We never heard what became of her.[1]

"As the summer advanced we were invited by Professor Bache to go into tents with him and his party of triangulation on Mount Humpback. We traveled by trail to Bangor, and then took stages to Mount Humpback, spending a night in an old-fashioned inn on the road, much visited by trout fishers. Here was the first man milliner we had met. He was six feet in height, strong in proportion, and an exquisite

[1] The prevailing attitude of Southern Society before and many years after the war.

seamster, as he proved by making a delicate shirred satin bonnet. At supper we had immense dishes of speckled trout caught by the gentlemen anglers who were spending a few weeks there. At day dawn we heard a voice declaiming, in a most impressive tone, apparently to a crowded meeting. Mr. Davis arose and was seized with such spasmodic attacks of laughter that I joined him and looked into the barnyard. On a small cart, which was standing in the yard, arrayed in a long, figured calico dressing-gown, stood the deft seamster of the night before, with a pan of shelled corn, surrounded by a flock of chickens, turkeys, geese, and ducks, each applauding vociferously while he addresed them with a certain kind of eloquence upon all the topics of the day. As he threw one handful of corn after another out to them, he pleaded, 'Consider, weigh, and accept these arguments, be just to one another, your liberties, your lives depend upon it.' When he saw Mr. Davis's laughing face at the window he made a deep bow, and said: 'Fellow-citizens, allow me to present one more able and more eloquent than myself. Hear ye him.' After breakfast we proceeded on our journey, and the oratory of the merry mountebank has ever since remained a cheerful reminiscence and often recalled.

"We drove nine miles over a most wonderful natural road, called by the country people 'Horseback,' elevated over sixty feet and sloping steeply down on each side to the valley which it intersected, like a levee built by Titans. Interspersed throughout the rich valley on either side, in the lush green grass, were the most enormous bowlders of granite, many of which looked like Egyptian tombs. As there was no stone of the kind underlying the soil, Professor Bache thought they had been left there by some great flood. The apex on which we drove was only about twenty-five feet wide and nearly uniform throughout its whole length, which

stretched to the foot of Mount Humpback. There we found an ox team in waiting hitched to a sled, and we were driven up the side of the mountain, which was so steep that the oxen seemed sometimes to be about to fall back upon us. These were the first oxen I ever saw goaded, and Mr. Davis remonstrated many times against it with the driver.

"On a pleateau near the top were white tents pitched one for each of us, an excellent cook, tenderloin steaks from Bangor, vegetables from the neighboring farms, and to all this comfort was added the newest books, and an exquisite and very large musical box which played 'Ah, che la morte,' and many other gems of the then new operas of Verdi. Professor Bache, who could not sing a tune, kept up a pleased murmur of unmusical accompaniment as an expression of his delight. He read aloud at night, and a part of the day we watched him taking observations and enjoyed his clear explanations of his methods. As the sun went down and shone upon the heliotropes, one fixed star after another gleamed out on the distant hill-tops, and our heliotrope answered back again to the dumb messages sent by scientists on every hill. The most noticeable thing to us, who were used to the insect clamor of our summer nights, was the silence on the mountain, and we saw no evidences of insect life. The fall of a leaf could be plainly heard, and it seemed to afford relief to Mr. Davis's exacerbated nerves, after the noise and bustle of Washington, to stay in this secluded place where he could be a lotus eater for a while.

"When not engaged in watching the survey work, we looked for the numerous signs of the glacial period, reasoned and wondered over them, picked up ghost flowers and found exquisite mosses, sometimes a foot deep, of velvety green. Mr. Davis took our little girl with us on his shoulder,

and did all the things so joyful to towns-people on an outing in the country. So health came back to his wasted form, and his sight improved daily. After three happy weeks we returned to Portland, bade our good friends there farewell, and went down to Boston, intending only to remain a day; but our baby, Jeff, was seized with membranous croup, and became dangerously ill at the Tremont House. Then I saw Boston under its most lovable guise. Every kindness was showered upon us that benevolence and sympathy could suggest. Many ladies called to inquire for him, but as the baby was too ill to be left for a moment, I saw but few of them.

"At the darkest hour when we feared the worst, and a foggy night was setting in upon the evening of a raw day, a large, gentle-looking lady knocked at the door in a house dress. She introduced herself as Mrs. Harrison Grey Otis, with whose name we were of course familiar, and said she had come to spend the night and help me to nurse. She kissed the baby and looked over the prescriptions with an experienced eye, offered comforting suggestions, and in fact seemed to diffuse a sense of relief and confidence about her. She said she was having her house painted, and feared the odor would injure the baby, or she would take him home with her. Throughout the long anxious night she sat calm and tender, doing what she could, and this was much. After thirty years this memory is clear and blessed to me, and her name has always been honored in our household. The Honorable William Appleton, Robert C. Winthrop, Caleb Cushing, Edward Everett, Colonel Charles Green, of *The Post*, Professor Pearce, Sidney Webster, and hundreds of others expressed their sympathy in the kindest manner. The happiest hours I spent in Boston were in Mr. Everett's library, looking over the editions de luxe in which it abounded, and

hearing him talk about his travels. These reminiscences of the city to this day soften all the asperities developed by our bloody war.

"Mr. Davis was invited to speak in Faneuil Hall by a committee consisting of the leading men of his party, and was glad of the opportunity to plead with the men of Massachusetts against the encroachments upon the rights and domestic institutions of the South; and indeed, many of the Democrats who urged him to make the address were anxious upon this point, one of whom was Benjamin F. Butler, then an enthusiastic State rights Democrat, but who, I think, was considered a kind of 'ward politician.' . . . . . .

"His speech was received with enthusiasm, and Mr. Davis came home pleased with the reception accorded him, but far more happy over the hope of a peaceable adjustment of the sectional dissonance, the acerbity of which existed not in his heart, but in theirs who were the aggressors. As soon as our boy was better we bade farewell to Boston, and though 'The tender grace of a day that is dead, can never come back to me,' we often looked through the mists of the long ago, and heartily rendered thanks to those who were actively kind to us when we were in dire need.

"In Boston we were joined by Colonel Samuel Cooper and Professor Pearce, and we all went to New York together. At breakfast Professor Bache came in, flushed with the triumph of the cable-layers. He brought a copy of Queen Victoria's cablegram, 'Peace on earth and good-will toward men.' Then began a series of questionings. Professor Pearce believed it had really been sent and received. Professor Bache said he was inclined to think it must be true; a hoax would cause so much indignation that the perpetrator would not be safe. Governor Seymour thought it was not

a real despatch. Mr. Davis felt almost sure that the cable could not be insulated so as to transmit the fluid so far. The pressure of the sea would break the cable. In other words, it was an impossibility; but the great feat had been accomplished, though the belief in it percolated very slowly through the minds of the people of that day."

With some further observations as to the progress of science and the influence of war foreign, or otherwise, on the price of cotton which she designates as the victim of all earthly disasters she closes her account of their summer vacation with the information that they "returned in safety to Washington, and Mr. Davis, after the first frost, which is the period our people believe makes one safe from chills and fevers, returned to Mississippi to straighten out plantation matters and give an account of his stewardship to his constituents."

CHAPTER XXXVIII

POLITICAL AND SOCIAL

The situation in both political and social circles during the winter of 1859-60 had undergone a marked change. Issues were beginning to take a more definite form in the platforms of the two parties and these were as far apart as the poles. Washington was a hot bed of politics. The quietude of the Pierce administration had completely vanished. Varina was herself thinking seriously of public questions. Hitherto, though she had always taken a lively interest in such matters, she had left the responsibility of them to her husband. The public mind, however, had grown so full of the questions and problems confronting the country, and sectional controversies had grown to be so bitter and acrid that no one, especially the intelligent woman, could escape from giving them much serious thought. Many of this type, even at that day had their ear to the ground and she may well be classed as one of the first among them.

While she and her husband had intensely enjoyed their summer vacation and had found much in their visit to the New England states to strengthen the hope that there might yet be peace and concord in the land, they realized that guests for the hour never see all that is going on in the house, or as a "po white" on the Brierfield expressed it, "all that went in the pot." Too, in the main they had had Democratic associations. They were not at home again in the National Capital, but a few days before they discovered that the situa-

tion was any thing but reassuring. Despite the various theories advanced and the several compromises that had been proposed, any one of which chimerical as some seemed to be, would have been preferable to the solution resorted to, the skies had hand-sized clouds enough thickening and multiplying daily. Though the various compromises had been discussed and debated in every section of the country, more in the Southern section where politics flourished as a native growth, the situation continued serious. That as a theory secession was taking a firmer hold on the people of the South was evident. Every mail brought them armsfull of circulars, letters and newspapers filled with inflammatory appeals to the people to resist the spirit of aggression and dominance on the part of the North, denunciation of lukewarm leaders by the crossroads conservators of Democracy and often open threats of secession. The spirit of both letters and editorials indicated that the South was deeply incensed and in a state of alarm over the further encroachment of Federal power lurking in the methods and programs of the Republican party now becoming as strong in legislation as the Democrats who had to a large extent controlled the country for a half century.[1]

Anxious over the situation but still hoping that cooler spirits in both parties would be able to adjust matters Jefferson Davis turned his attention once more to public affairs. He had through long years of public service acquired that restraint and discipline that only powerful natures develop with the passage of time. He felt that the South had provo-

[1] Congress at that time had in the Senate thirty-eight Democrats, twenty-five Republicans, and two Americans, in the House of Representatives one hundred and nine Republicans, eighty-eight administration Democrats, thirteen anti-Lecompton Democrats and twenty-seven Americans.

cation of the most serious nature; he believed in the right of a State to govern and regulate its domestic affairs; had advocated the doctrine of States' Rights during his first years in Congress with much more youthful fervor and aggressiveness than in later years—years during which he had discovered the danger of contniual agitation. He had no desire to see the Union disrupted; and in every public utterance and document was deploring such a contingency whenever called upon to discuss the issues before the country. With the same insight as was shown by Daniel Webster he foresaw the consequence of continued disregard of the constitutional rights of the States, and lost no opportunity of warning his countrymen of the danger of continued pressure being put upon the Southern Section. The "irrepressible conflict" however, as historians are wont to call it, was taking outline and shape and drawing nearer than either the South or the North dreamed. The spirit in some quarters was daily growing more bitter and irreconcilable. Suspicion even of the great champion of States' Rights lurked in the public thought. Whig papers in Mississippi twitted his constituents.[1] Neither did these understand his visit to New England—forgot that it was no more than what could have been expected for Democratic leaders of one section to invite those of another to address the people on matters of public interest—forgot that their own climate was not at that time believed by Northern physicians to be suitable for an invalid suffering from malaria and a depletion of nerve forces—forgot everything but the wrongs that burned their breasts. What if they did live in the malaria-swamps of the South?—What if they did have malaria?—It

[1] The Whig name in politics continued in the lower South until the establishment of the Confederacy.

was no business of public servants to dodge such an insignificant evil when things of more vital importance were demanding their attention—health was little in comparison with the rights and privileges of the people in matters of government. Men in those days lived till they died doing their duty, and it was their duty to defend their political rights. So they argued captiously and high handedly enough, for Democracy was a heady wine, brewed in Saxon bottles in ages gone by, to these inheritors of the open country and goodly possessions. Suspicion in some instances grew so strong that it was declared that Jefferson Davis was drifting aimlessly, not sure of any waters in which he sailed.[1] Political opponents said that he was bidding for the highest stake —that national honors had appealed to him, even the Presidency, and he had lost his zeal in defense of Southern institutions. The New England trip seemed to them to savor too much of the olive branch spirit which was not now in keeping with the dignity of the situation—was wholly unnecessary—the South had passed the "olive branch" stage and the peace making was now expected of the North. Though this was now the spirit of the Hotspurs of the South, and there were legions of the type springing up in every community and crossroads village, cooler minds were at work, and with these Jefferson Davis hoped to discuss the situation. The Conventions so far for the most part steered clear of the word secession, but on the street and by the fireside it burned upon many a tongue.

Varina who knew all her husband's thoughts and plans agreed with him that it was best for him to go down into the Gulf States and confer with the people not only of his own State but throughout that section. In the matter of his

[1] Jefferson Davis by William E. Dodd. p. 191.

own record in the Senate she felt sure that he could meet all criticism of his New England visit and set right any misapprehension under which they might be laboring, faint echoes of which had reached them in the National Capital. Of one thing she had always felt certain, that, the hold he had upon his own people. Her discernment in such matters in the main was good, for, although he had been out of the State and not in active contact with his people, no man among them was by the majority thought to be his equal, nor was held in higher esteem.

While he was in the South, Varina remained in Washington with her children planning for the future welfare of her family which still included her sister, Maggie, and young brothers Beckett and Jefferson. In addition to her own social responsibilities, her young sister's social affairs were multiplying, especially since school days were over; her brothers must be settled in school again and her own noisy young brood not to be neglected for a moment. While these numerous cares and duties were assumed, with her usual easy method of disposing matters, but always with warm interest and affection, nothing absorbed her to the extent of taking her long away from her husband. As much affection as she freely spent on others, it did not diminish the rich store she lavished on him.

She was a woman of much industry and practicality beneath her gay assumption at times of being a drone and a sluggard. Her home was a well kept one, her servants carefully trained and devoted to her as associates at Natchez have so often observed. But mixed with her methods of order and system was an ability for relaxation that insured ease and comfort to all about her.[1] Now that they had be-

[1] Conversations with descendants of contemporaries.

come accustomed to Washington as a permanent home, she was anxious for him to retain his place in the Senate indefinitely. True it did not give them quite the social prestige that she had enjoyed while he was in the Cabinet, but from some standpoints, and these were for the most intellectual, it held more varied advantages and offered an ampler opportunity for the mental refreshment that both she and her husband craved. Life in Washington had become very attractive to her. Numberless courtesies of friends recurred to her mind such as Seward who lived several blocks away sending when she was very ill her nurse to her when the snow had blocked the streets and sidewalks of the city; his later concern and affection for her husband through long weeks of illness; the President himself wading through the snow to inquire about her when she was desperately ill, and all the lovely interest in herself and children that the President's wife had taken,—these and numerous other manifestations of friendship from which she knew so well how to extract happiness occurred to her mind daily. Besides, and the practical had its appeal in her well-rounded nature, she could in the city where, crude as they were in comparison with what is enjoyed today, with conveniences and improved conditions care for her family much better than on the isolated Brierfield farm; could be of asisstance in the education and placing in position of her young brothers —a task she had set herself with deep affection and interest —could keep her sister Maggie in more extensive social surroundings. Yes, Varina was anxious enough for her husband to retain his hold upon his constituency and his failure to do so would have been a keen and bitter disappointment to her at the present juncture. The paramount feeling, however, connected with his continued public life was that she could

not now bear the thought of his losing his prestige and control in the public affairs of the nation. She had not craved public life, was still rather critical of its ultimate advantages in the matter of happiness and in the question of rearing a family, but any defeat in connection with him had always stung her to the quick and at this day would have been doubly painful.

Jefferson Davis' welcome in the South lacked something of the warmth he had been accustomed to on his various home comings. To his regret, but hardly surprise, he found the most bitter spirit of condemnation of the Republican programs and policies in Congress everywhere, especially in the ranks of his own constituency and much as they strove to disguise it and as much as they honored him he soon became aware that he had not measured up to their standard as a leader, certainly, they said among themselves, there was not the aggressiveness that he had displayed in the past. They were now ready for extreme resistance of the pressure being put upon them, and the spirit was growing all over the South in city and village and throughout the open country, especially among the aristocracy who in the last analysis ruled the country. The spirit was increasing daily irrespective of what was taking place in political meetings, and women themselves were fanning the flame as women alone know how to do whether veiled or shorn. Writing of this period, Varina, with a partiality that sometimes but not often got the best of her judgment, does not admit that any but an Arcadian state of affairs existed between her husband and his followers. She writes that after the first frost it was usually supposed that the Southern climate was safe in the matter of "chills and fevers" and that her husband went down to the Brierfield place to "straighten out his plantation affairs."

She gives this motive for his going before she thinks it necessary to add "and to give an account of his stewardship to his people." He was still their "Colonel" a name that had stuck by him since Monteray and Buena Vista; that "they had no sharp criticism of him,"—"not a word of censure;" "no man ever had more generous, consistent and admiring constituency;" "confident of such loyalty he had always told them that if he could not be their first choice he did not wish to serve them." But that they did take their "Colonel" to task is shown in her own admission that they "argued" the point with him and with "equal frankness."

After a short period during which he spoke to them on several public occasions his magnetism brought them to his side once more; but even with these speeches he still felt that he had failed to sooth the public mind or to help the situation to any permanent extent. Afterwards he went to spend a few days at "Brierfield" and "The Hurricane" with his brother Joseph with whom it had always been such a comfort to discuss public matters. He found the ageing brother as irate over Republican policies as any impetuous youth in the country. With many misgivings and a heavy heart he started on his return trip to Washington. He continued despondent as to the future of the whole country as he gazed about on the beautiful section. He could but believe that the grievance of the people was a righteous one and that in the matter of their complaints not even the blind to public weal could deny that they were being solely tried.

The doctrine of States' Rights, a deep-laid Anglo-Saxon principal, and one that permeated the Constitution he knew was now being discussed at every public meeting, and the Blue Cockade, eagerly fashioned by high spirited Southern women, worn symbolically on the lapel of hundreds of coun-

try gentlemen. The country had been bred up on it since the days of Jefferson. Virginia statesmen had handed it down, and flaming editorials of numerous minor Southern editors as fiery as any of Rhetts, Toombs and Yancey's had kept it constantly before the eyes of the people. However, a certain element might deplore it the seeds of secession had been sown broadcast through the years and germination was at hand, had set in and was being sedulously cultivated by the indignant, and wrathful of every community. Jefferson Davis could see it on hundreds of faces around him; could catch it in the voices and hear it in the fierce moods of a people who could do both their prayers and oaths to a turn.

Noting as he passed through the rich section, which the census of 1860 showed to be the wealthiest in the Union, the proud independent life of the people, he felt that such a race would not tamely submit to coercion of any nature. A race that scorned the thought that they were not themselves conservators of the public peace and welfare. As he gazed out of the car windows, the great estates lying along the track appeared to him like colonies able to dwell unto themselves; there, domesticity was at its best—master and slave, the latter a savage but yesterday, dwelling together in close contact every advantage in favor of the weaker race. The poor whites isolated and received only after they had forged to the front and had in the colloquial phrase of that day, "passed muster" were in comparison a neglected people. Not only were the negroes sharers in the land's prosperity but beneficiaries of the intimate presence and associations of a superior race inheriting its integrities, its amenities, its faiths and hopes and all that an Anglo-Saxon people had accumulated for centuries. He did not doubt the honorable intention of his people, he did not doubt that they had griev-

ance as deep seated as any who in the history of the world had rebelled against tyranny. But was it wise to take a step that was certain to shake the foundation of this American civilization? It was forced upon him that the North was much to blame in the controversy—the reformers had lost sight of the blessings that were coming to the negroes in what was to a great extent a missionary field where a love far more sincere than the foreign missionary generally feels was the bond between the two races. He felt that the Republicans had captured the reform merely as a vote getting plank in their platform. Why could not the question be left alone to solve itself in the spiritual and intellectual processes of the mind? To what dire lengths would it go in the hands of the politicians? His thought, Mrs. Davis reminds us in her Memoir continually dwelt on this solution of the problem. In the persistent efforts to gain supremacy in government did the Republican party a late lineal descendant of the Free Soilers with close kinship with the old Whig party of the North—did this wight and weakling as yet of no weight as parties go and little feared by the strong Democracy of long established leadership, see its chance in the anti-slavery movement? The movement certainly had no strong hold upon its leaders in earlier days. It had now become an outstanding Republican issue in some States and wherefore? Both party and political aspirant reap rich harvest at times in the sponsorship of reforms and it was evident that the Republican party was now outwardly interesting itself as much in the social movement as in its protest of the repeal of the Missouri Compromise. If it saw its chance the abolitionists also saw theirs—Together they would Republicanize the West—Could the Democrats withstand it? Would the South remain submissive?

Journeying on he continued to muse of many phases of the question; of the great Chatham, who constantly voiced his fears in the following out-burst in the British Parliament of the threatened revolt of the American colonies—"For God's sake then my Lords let the way be instantly opened for reconciliation, I say instantly, or it will be too late forever." Had this not been his own warning for many months in the National Congress and would not the Congressional records throughout future years show beyond cavil that he did so. Did he not know better than they of the North the proud and petulant spirit of the South, where revolt once more was raising its head against what was believed to be oppression and tyranny?

With a last look at his beloved land he turned away his face, not to behold it again until it had proclaimed in haughty boastful tones it independence and separate destiny.

Varina was anxiously awaiting him, eager to hear the true situation in the South, since his letters had not been as optimistic as usual. One glance, however, at his stern, pale face and she realized that he was being confronted by some fearful and imminent dilemma and hazard. He had much to tell her of "Brierfield"—her own family was now living in New Orleans—"The Hurricane" and his brother Joseph; and as the winter drew on they got back into the routine of official life, his better health enabling him through the next two Sessions of Congress to take up with more power and force the defense of the South.

Varina continued to take a prominent part in official social life during these unsettled days. Always popular herself she made her house a popular one for both Democrats and Republicans. Many of the latter continuing to pay social and even family calls. Seward who was now coming forward

into great prominence, though opposing with a crafty strategy and stubbornness all Democratic measures, still remained friendly and sought them out at all receptions and places where official circles gathered in formal intercourse. He was fond of both the husband and wife, and enjoyed no little startling the sincere Varina at times with some Machiavelian gesture feigned or genuine, she hardly knew which.

There was about his beak-like face and harsh rasping voice and manner something that appealed to them in spite of the great gulf widening daily between them. Though Varina was sometimes shocked at his lack, or pretended lack, of real feeling, in view of the fact that he could arouse so much in the minds of others, she believed him to be the most powerful influence in the Republican party at that particular time. That he extracted much sardonic amusement out of all that was going on about him was evident, displaying a capacity for infinite jest, deep insight and a disgust for the intellectually obtuse somewhat similar to that of his brilliant contemporary Lord Melbourne.

It was during these years that Varina first met Mrs. Joseph E. Johnston whose husband belonged to the army. That they liked or disliked each other from the very outset is a matter of conjecture. However, it is a subject that cannot be passed over in a biography of Varina Howell Davis as much as the author might wish to omit it. They were often seen together. Mrs. Johnston was a cultivated, but rather affected woman, a member of an old Maryland family and popular in her small coteries, and Varina a pretty, well born, highly educated, and somewhat pampered favorite of society, admired by both men and women. Having lived all her life in high official circles in Washington she was *en*

rapport with all the social customs that were in vogue among both the home and foreign representatives of the country a continuous opportunity that did not come to many of her contemporaries. Long before she had become mistress of the White House of the Confederacy, she had been a prominent and magnetic figure in a brilliant society.

Mrs. James Chestnut of South Carolina, writing in substance in after years, said that Varina doubtless missed all the gay life at Washington, numbering among her losses Mrs. Emory and Mrs. Joseph E. Johnston, seems to imply that she saw a great deal of the latter and that their relations at that time were friendly.[1] That Varina loved many of her women friends devotedly is seen in all her letters and in all the records that relate to her, and of women generally she spoke affectionately. However, it may be judged from what her biography already reveals that there were some people, both men and women, for whom she did not care. That she was never given to the deadly animosities that burn to the core there is proof enough. There were gossips in that day as in this, and women had their maids and what is sometimes far worse their intimates. What the former contributes is sometimes significant, still one has to take into consideration their lack of ability to judge of character, their own standards being their guide in such matters. The latter in moments of indiscretion in all probability attempt to tell the truth though the relation that these bear to the object of their characterization must also be considered. If it is true that Mrs. Johnston confided to her intimates in terms of reproach that Varina Howell Davis was "a western woman" and later, when feelings and interest were more involved,

[1] A warm friendship existed between Mrs. Davis and Mrs. Emory that continued through life.

quoting a confident, that she was a "coarse western woman," it may be set down for certain that the proud-hearted, well-born, and well-educated woman, sensitive even to the sound of doubtful words and phrases on women's lips, who had spent all her life in the very best society and most of it in the Nation's Capital, would resent it and with much feeling. However, if Varina continued to hold it against her, her *Memoir* fails to record it. As one who has made a recent portrait of her has observed in some such words, her sketches of the many great characters that appear in her book are remarkably free from harshness or satire, though the temptation to it at times must have been great.[1] A close study of her life reveals in a beautiful fashion that forgiveness of injury and wrong became a powerful attribute of her nature.

[1] *Wives* by Gamaliel Bradford.

CHAPTER XXXIX

DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION IN CHARLESTON, 1860

THE SOUTH was now more determined on resistance than Congress or the North dreamed or she herself was fully conscious of. She saw her power yearly waning in the National Congress; with a close hard hand being slowly taken from her. The wrangling at times grew fierce and uproarious, confusion reigning in both houses of Congress. Still the stubborn, tenacious, obdurate or obtuse, what in this day would be called "hard-boiled" politician did not dream that danger threatened? Wrangling there had always been and always would be and not a whit more undecorous than in the day of the stately Jefferson and the debonair Hamilton. The country was a big one sprawling everywhere, and growing larger each day in the matter of legislation. Over such a wide domain it took courage, and if need be fierce debate and argument to adjust matters. A people with such varied interests could not be served without concessions and compromises. But it would end there with one side or the other giving in. The North believed that it would be the South, was obsessed with the idea, even harboring a tyrannical impulse that it should be made to do so. The South fairly shook with rage—the air reeking in some quarters with threats and curses. So they disputed, bickered and quarreled on over their difficulties and differences until even Seward grew sick of the whole controversy, writing to his wife in substance that he wished he had never heard of such things

as compromises, reforms and new territory. Some were tired even of the Constitution. The government was an experiment after all and it took a test of some kind, they hardly knew what, to decide its permanency. But the South, more wide spread than was realized, had made up its mind that if certain constitutional rights were not respected it would choose for itself. Yancey, Toombs, and A. P. Calhoun set on hotly by the brilliant Rhetts of the Mercury had their program in hand. Still many held out for the Union.

Then a thing occurred so catastrophic in its nature as to spread a veil of darkness over the eyes even of the Southerners who were straining to catch the light. At the highest tide of the bitter controversy in Congressional halls a secret conspiracy, organized by John Brown who had gained an unsavory reputation in numerous bloody conflicts in Kansas, plotted a deed the very nature of which was revolting to the people both of the South and the North. Virginia was to be the scene of a bloody massacre of the sleeping inhabitants by their own slaves. While the anti-slavery cause was being conducted along legitimate lines by the best element in the North, the rabid Brown whose fanaticism had taken the form of insanity, with murderous intent, had collected for the use of his followers hundreds of carbines, pistols and heavy iron pikes and deposited them near Harpers Ferry, the word having been passed secretly among his followers that the insurrection would begin on the night of October 16, 1859. And thus was set on foot the infamous John Brown Raid which was to arouse the anger of the Southern people as never before. With sixteen white men and only five negro confederates, it being difficult to induce the latter to join the murderous midnight attack on their sleeping masters, Brown rushed across the Potomac and seized all the military stores

at Harpers Ferry. When the inhabitants awoke the next morning they found to their astonishments and alarm that Brown and his followers held the town. It took the whole day of Monday following for the people to assemble and attack the angry mob during which five Virginia citizens were slain and nine wounded. By Tuesday morning Brown, who had retreated to the engine house, was captured by Major Robert E. Lee, and was later tried, convicted by a jury and hung.

The whole affair, a lengthy account of which was at the time given by President Buchanan in his message to Congress stirred the South from Richmond to the far Louisiana borders. The thing that burned deeper in the hearts of the Southern people was the approbation given the deed in some sections of the North as shown in the various forms of condonement. If historical records are correct cannon were fired in salute of the event, bells were tolled, and prayers were offered in many rabid abolition communities. The South believed that it had already born[2]as many grievances and aggressions as it could stand with any degree of justice and self-respect. In the language of Henry Watterson at a later period, *"It would not accept old John Brown."* At the risk of being consigned to the Northern critics' limbo the author joins Watterson in the opinion that the approval and the praise of John Brown at the time of his crime and which continues to this day in some quarters constitute a remarkable display of intellectual density on the part of the American mind, or else it indicates a downright unwillingness,[1] on account of sectional lines, to tell the truth.

[1] Historians write variously of the plot. The author is Southern, though the portraits of Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis hang above her desk, and she believes that both discharged their duty, far better than any others of that day would have done in their places.

Congress was now in daily turmoil and far worse off for the John Brown affair, its rank and file far more ready to disagree. Though some were weary of the strife, several members of the Republican party were known to be in sympathy with the murderous affair. The reformers, whose gesture had lately become a sweeping one, were now having their anti-slavery propaganda in good working order, and did not abate their efforts one whit with the John Brown attack on the sleeping inhabitants of Virginia. Nor were they unlike reformers the world over, both religious and civic. These felt that they had a sacred mission to perform —owed a sacred obligation to society—and reformers have always stressed the word sacred in their propaganda, and could not wait for God's time nor for any time but their own. So they labored with something of a philosophy that if your shanks will not fit the Promethean bed, which is generously offered you, off with them though you bleed to death. Their larger purpose was a righteous enough one, but as is the case with most reforms they lost sight of the broader meaning of their creed in dealing with those opposing them. Among other things Israel's God of vengeance had been brought to America.

The Republican party could no longer dwell apart from the reformers. Abraham Lincoln coming into public notice half unconsciously scratched his head, with that frequent, far away, arrested look so far as the things immediately around him were concerned, either wife or guest, and wondered if it were not imperative that he should himself begin an anti-slavery crusade. Was it not the wise course for him to pursue? And he was wiser than Seward then thought him, with that shrewd wisdom that finds security in swimming with the tide. But that the reformers were daily con-

verting him to an ethical view of the question is quite certain. Still it continued to be good politics, irrespective of any ethics. The regulation of the political status of the new territory was the end now desired. The outright abolition plank for new Territories would give the Republicans more representation in Congress, which the South dreaded above all things. Uncle Tom's Cabin, and the John Brown plot to stir up an insurrection among the slaves in Virginia, were being energetically used for political purposes. This additional strength would land the new party without a doubt, and more, the candidate who preached the doctrine which these proclaimed.

Stephen A. Douglas, chairman of the committee on Territories and more alive than either the "New Comer" from Illinois or the late War Minister thought him to be, as the author of "Squatter Sovereignty" was leading a new phase of it under the guise that gave one at least the impression of popular sovereignty.[1] He thought that he had a program that could be made to work both ways, that is, give the South which had no great population to spare a chance to Southernize the Territories by settlement, in the meantime giving the North which had a large population to spare an opportunity of determining their political future.[2] This course adopted would satisfy and co-ordinate all opinions however divergent. But shrewder and wiser minds saw in this program—now thoroughly distrusted by Jefferson Davis and a large following, loss of power and civil war in the new territory, as had been the case in the instance of the Kansas settlement. However the Douglas program in the National Democratic

[1] So much in the lives of Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis corresponds that it sounds almost humorous to note that furthermore neither liked Douglas.

[2] Northern Democrats were opposed to slavery.

Convention of 1860 caught many votes even some in the South notwithstanding the powerful Mercury and the watch dog methods of Yancey, but not enough to give him the nomination. The Convention was carried down to Charleston for the very purpose of putting Douglas out of the running once and for all.[1] At that time South Carolina was in reality shaping the future course of the South, which more and more each day was acknowledging her leadership. From the northern borders of the South to the Gulf shores the Charleston Mercury was moulding public sentiment and the Richmond Dispatch was not much behind it in heat of expression. The Cotton States' papers took their cue from these.

When the Convention assembled the Southern Democrats already had their ultimatum, the endorsement of which they were now concerned. The strict Constitutionalist in the Convention better known as the "Old Line" Democrats in other words the Calhoun Democrats stressed the Dred Scott decision, adhered to the views of the Supreme Court, as given by Chief Justice Taney, and to slavery as an institution, all regarding the last as justified by the Constitution of the United States which treated slaves as property. But the Rhetts, the Yanceys and Jefferson Davis did not have it all their way. When the convention on April 23 began balloting, from day to day it was soon discovered that the Squatter Sovereignty wing under the "Little Giant's" manipulations refused to yield an inch. The Westerners were for him almost solidly. The Convention was not more free of chicanery than that of the Republicans held in Chicago to enlist strength, and was less careful of the main interests at stake. All dramatics known at that day in the proceedings of Conventions were resorted to. Not any

[1] Jefferson Davis by William E. Dodd.

noisier, it is certain, were such gatherings than they are at the present but displaying more open heat, since men at that day were much sincerer in their convictions, at least more out-spoken than at the present. But this was not at first noticeable. The atmosphere of the convention in the opening days had the solemnity as of "some solemn confirmation of souls." The South was in sore straits and many desired a reconciliation with the North if it could be had on any sound basis whatever. The spirit of secession in the convention seemed extinguished, and pacification was visible, in the prayers and public utterances of both factions of the body.

In a short while however, as the balloting continued, the apparent harmony in the convention was lost over the questions arising out of the position of Douglas' "Squatter Sovereignty" program. When a majority of the Convention approved that position the States of Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, Florida, Texas, Arkansas, Georgia, Tennessee, Kentucky, Oregon and California withdrew from the convention. The delegates from Virginia remained, but their spirit was dissatisfied and aggressive. In the general dissatisfaction of the proceedings of the convention old national grievances were revived, as is reflected in the speech of Mr. Russell, the delegate from Virginia, when he announced in an impassioned speech in words to the effect that the John Brown Massacre was the opening gun of the "irrepressible conflict. The Virginia delegates later offered a test question of her willingness to longer act with the Douglas Convention, and offered the following resolution which clearly states her position upon the National questions at issue: "That the citizens of the United States have an equal right

to settle with their property in the Territories of the United States; and that under the decision of the Supreme Court of the United States, which we recognize as the correct exposition of the Constitution of the United States, neither the rights of persons nor of property can be impaired by Congressional or Territorial legislation." This position was in agreement with the attitude of the States which had already withdrawn from the Convention, as well as with the principles advocated by Southern representatives in Congress. The resolution when introduced to the convention was smothered by cries of "not in order," and Virginia continued haughty and captious. Her manifesto or ultimatum adhered to in the halls of Congress would have made secession her only alternative.

In the Convention Douglas proved to be stronger than it was supposed he would be, especially with the Western delegation, with whom it was Douglas or no one, and one sometimes wonders if it was not because its members were laboring with the hope of defeating Lincoln, whom they feared would be the Republican nominee. Douglas had in the past triumphed in that section and no good will existed between the two. Had he won the nomination in the Convention some historians think it very probable that it would have given the country another Democratic victory. He was, however, pledged to a platform that would have very certainly brought about secession. In the Convention throughout the Southern delegation had remained unmoveable in its attitude towards "Squatter Sovereignty" and these determined that the South should not be euchred out of its rights as they interpreted them. William L. Yancey and the Rhetts —veritable bell weathers, had gathered their followers in a separate conclave and soon the Convention in utter confusion

adjourned to meet at Baltimore. Of the Convention, and its proceedings Mrs. Davis, who had accompanied her husband to Charleston, gives a graphic account, and one may be assured that she was no unconcerned spectator. She has left no authoritative record of an ambition on her part to see her husband raised to the highest position in the Nation but believing him perfectly fitted for that position, considering all things could there be any objection to her having felt the stirrings of such an ambition? She may have done so, and it is not beyond a possibility that her husband also did. But what possible censure could attach to either for indulging the aspiration. One must remember that Massachusetts was steadily casting its vote for the distinguished Southern Senator who stood up as a worthy peer among all that array of aristocracy and with a dignity comparable to the most exacting of the old Colonial States.

But Jefferson Davis whatever hopes, he may have had soon saw that it would be impossible to bring the Douglas wing of the convention over to a policy and program that the Southern delegates would find acceptable. No angle of the matter reveals the least intention on the part of the majority of the Southern delegation to accept Douglas, and this being the situation, Jefferson Davis, had he been disposed, could not have helped him. Certainly not in the face of the Rhetts of South Carolina and Yancey of Alabama.

With keen interest Varina noted all that went on in the convention, the persistency and at times strategy of the Douglas men, the arrogance of the brilliant Rhetts and their followers composed of poet, scholar, lawyer and country gentlemen, the lack of harmony, the failure of the Northern delegates to understand Southern members of the Conven-

tion. "They should send their children to school together" she gayly remarked citing Black Hawk's theory for removing suspicion and all other evils dividing the two sections. She enjoyed the stir and crowd as usual. It always acted like a tonic to her and despite the many things that constantly occurred around her which both men and women were permitting to get on their nerves, some behaving in a manner that brought upon them ridicule, she kept her poise. A Mississippi delegate declared that she was "all that made the funeral convention endurable." Her sense of the incongruous, droll and ludicrous grew upon her with the years and the political atmosphere of the day was not without a full share of such things. It amused her when the "Down-South Free-soiler" told her that the Convention "was pieded, very much pieded, and not very much of anything else." That she was partisan enough cannot be denied, and when the Douglas "Squatter Sovereignty" scheme fell under the scorpion lash and far worse the ridicule of the dreaded Mercury she could not suppress a smile.

That the persistent favor shown her husband by Massachusetts casting for him forty-nine votes in unbroken succession should give her sufficient pleasure to last down to old age is seen in her *Memoir.* Though she was outwardly not of the serious, studious type and generally preferred the social element in public affairs few of the best equipped delegates in the convention understood the questions and problems before the country better than she. A long and close association with public affairs had given her a deep insight into the country's history. In after years she wrote politely but with but little appreciation of Douglas, and attributes much of the Democratic failure to his extreme stubbornness if not selfishness. And historians must consider when as-

suming that he would have led the party to victory that since it was known that Lincoln favored abolition, and of a kind that the abolitionist dreamed was daily growing to be of the Garrison brand that of itself would give him a good start. And, too, Douglas was known to be intemperate both in speech and in the use of intoxicants while Lincoln was sober and of a steady purpose.

Of the Baltimore Convention Varina wrote in after years in pleasant vein:

"Everyone who could find standing room went from the adjacent cities. It put one in mind of the old Scotch song, 'O little wot ye wha's coming.' New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, Ohio, Illinois, Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, South Carolina, North Carolina—indeed, the anxious, thoughtful men from all the States poured in with propositions of pacification. They talked in groups of twos and threes in subdued tones, and listened to the proceedings of the convention as to their doom. In the galleries there were extraordinary scenes and by-plays. A lady in the audience she says was criticizing most severely the South and all things Southern, when an old man, who was supposed to be a preacher, looked at her and said, in a persuasive tone, 'Oh, lady, please don't talk so ugly, they are not as bad as you think.'

"June 18, found the Convention still balloting. The seceders had not been returned to their seats through intervention of the Douglas men. These in some perterbation met later in Richmond and after several further futile efforts united on the nomination of John C. Breckenridge who represented the very spirit of Southern chivalry if that armored old word may still be used in modern language."

"I trust I have the courage to lead a forlorn hope." he modestly told Varina immediately after the nomination. And paradoxical as it may appear this sprinkle of haughty descendants of the Cavaliers were at the same time modest souls. They were not as thick as blackberries in the South's population, but plentifully enough in the midst of all the rich ranks of arrogant, self-made Southern aristocracy they stood out distinct and unmistakable, affecting the outlook and giving tone and class if not caste to all. Scarcely a glimmer of their once glowing torch that flickered low in the deep shadows that enveloped the ruined gardens of the South is seen today in its rooty "new grounds" cleared and sown by organized "fresh hands."

CHAPTER XL

SECESSION OF SOUTH CAROLINA

The Thirty-sixth Congress witnessed the dissolution of the American Union. It was more than vaguely felt throughout the country by leading Democrats that the National Democratic Convention had bungled things to such an extent that it endangered a victory in November. With both Douglas and Breckenridge candidates it was felt that Abraham Lincoln would receive all the flotsom and jetsom that are usually swept into other ranks when party dissatisfaction arises from any cause. Still hoping against hope that Breckenridge would win, and if not Breckenridge then Douglas as preferable to Lincoln, the South under the determinded leadership and steering of South Carolina and such aggressive leaders as Rhett, Yancey and Toombs with Jefferson Davis standing firmly with them for Constitutional interpretation continued a heroic struggle to lead the Democratic party to success. Jefferson Davis, swallowing his pride, a difficult thing for him to do, had pleaded with Douglas to withdraw in the interest of the party but to no avail.

The country was in a state of near delirium with occasional outbursts in both the North and the South that were little more than orgies and saturnalias of hate. The John Brown raid in the South had not been more than numbered with Uncle Tom's Cabin and other atrocities and indiscretions before the publication of a book entitled 'The Impend-

ing Crisis' appeared to still further kindle the fires of discord between the two sections. On its appearance the Southern representation in Congress boiled with rage and society in Washington grew more unrestrained in speech than ever.

The book eminated from a source as undiscipline as that which had brought on the country the Brown tragedy. It was intended, or rather, to put the kindest construction on its purpose, was calculated to arm the non-slave holding whites of the South against the slaveholders—the poor whites against their neighbors—the same poor whites, Anglo-Saxon to the bone, who later marched as solidly with the Southern aristocracy as ever did Cromwell's Ironsides in his wake, or Charles' Cavaliers in his train to fight for what each conceived to be their rights guaranteed to them by their government—the poor whites who way down in their hearts would have been glad to see their rich neighbors deprived of their property, who hated the negroes who treated them contemptuously, but above all things hated the North and loved their own section with an intensity that was for anything more passionate and less selfish than that of the large landholders. When it came to war it is well known that these generally throughout the South forgot every other feeling but love of their own section.

While indignation was sweeping the South the book entitled 'The Impending Crisis' was received with favor by many Republicans in the National Congress, read eagerly by extremist, used as a campaign document, and pronounced a true statement of the issues between the two sections.

Lincoln himself was now stressing the abolition doctrine with a political sagacity born of his own shrewd wit, and with a larger conception and appreciation of the reform it is clear. No more slave states in the great West meant that

much less Democratic power in Congress. His election to the presidency in November had even before his inaugural given the reigns of power over into his hands and he began soon to get his bearings, though Seward, to some extent, continued to direct the policies of the party. He, however, failed to inoculate the former with the peace spirit advocated by Belmont of New York, or would one be excused if one said the commercial spirit. Lincoln was now becoming his own man and had determined to act independent of Seward. The majority in his party seemed always to have had more influence over him than any single leader.

The dashing Breckenridge had led his "forlorn hope," as he had called it in conversation with Varina, as gallantly as any knight of King Arthur and now waited in the Blue Grass region for further developments. Varina was inconsolable; next to the Republicans she blamed and ridiculed Douglas and his policies. She was now burning with patriotism and more hasty and impetuous than her self-contained husband, sending Breckenridge messages of bitter regret and often finding the hard white surface of her letters to friends in Natchez blistered with tears.[1] However, the resiliency of her nature, people said, was astonishing, enabling her to recover from disappointments and saving her from any frustration that would leave permanent injury.

It was a gloomy outlook for the Southern section when Congress assembled the following December. Jefferson Davis was still the South's standard bearer in legislative halls but there were no more Websters to warn his fellow countrymen that there was no North, no South. Both parties

[1] Reminiscences of contemporaries. Mrs. H. B. Kells, Mrs. Rosalie Quitman Duncan.

had arrived at the breaking point and pressure was being brought to bear by both Republicans and Democrats. Henceforth there was little moderation on either side. Trivial incidents that hitherto would have escaped notice were misunderstood and became only other torches added to the general conflagration.

During the winter of 1860-61 the South continued more doggedly than ever to contend for its rights. She knew that if the new territory was dominated by the Republican party that her power and place in the national government would be only nominal. To make her cause just and her position clearly understood, her representatives continued to stress the violation of the Constitution when Congress prepared to assume powers relative to such matters not delegated to it by the compact between the states. These had flung her victory in the Supreme Court in the face of the callous and unimpressible Republicans to no avail. Though somewhat baffled and puzzled she had no idea of giving up the fight in her own defense.

Luckily for the Republicans the anti-slavery reform, a movement of purely social progress had become very active and acted like a tonic in helping along their more subtle plans of establishing party supremacy through an increasing political representation. The reformers believed that they were the whole matter, but though the future political texture of the new territory seemed of trivial importance in the discussion of the popular anti-slavery movement, it held a more underlying and deeper significance than was admitted. The abolitionists though in the main innocent of the political situation were eager enough to take advantage of the increasing power of the party in Congress to push along their reform. It is doubtful, however, let it be repeated, if

either could have triumphed without the aid of the other. The reformers as a rule were more ethical than the politicians who did not hesitate to use the agitation for political purposes. But with the usual fanaticism that accompanies all such movements these continued to seek their ends by such wretched methods as to largely take away faith in their good intent. But when was it that the Anglo-Saxon did not win his victories with a bludgeon? This was never more patent than in the controversy that brought about the revolt of the Southern States. Historians wholly excusing the North have sought to trace the movement solely to selfish materialism and making the cultivation of cotton and possibly of tobacco and sugar that demanded heavy labor the pivot upon which all southern thought and purpose turned and this motivation to a certain extent did exist more or less throughout the South but not as a paramount one, nor as the main root. The large cotton growers along the Atlantic States from South Carolina down to Louisiana where the sugar interest set in were outspoken in the matter of the retention of slavery, but the system as a domestic necessity was just as fixed in Virginia and the upper South as elsewhere, the ease loving colonial aristocracy being more dependent upon it for individual service than the people of the newer States who still retained much of their pioneer initiative and hardihood. Both men and women formerly from all parts of the Union in numerous instances worked by the side of their slaves. This was continued by the small slaveholders until these had reached middle age and had accumulated property enough to warrant their "taking it easier." While the cotton and sugar interests called for the system in the lower South household and individual service no less than the cultivation of tobacco called for the institution in Virginia and in certain portions, of the other Colonial Southern States.

Its continuation was very generally desired by the owners throughout the South, and with the more thoughtful was regarded as a matter that State legislatures should and would in time deal with.

So much for the economic side of the question. The institution itself was already becoming a subject of social agitation in the South that called for some special reform as witnessed in a larger number of anti-slavery societies in the South than the North boasted. It could very well be set down as a fact that in the next century slavery would have been peacefully abolished in the South by State legislation and with the common consent of the majority of the people.

Hidden, however, in the folds of the controversy was a stronger influence in the bringing about of secession than the average historian is willing to admit, and was what the "sandhill" Southern legislator of the day called "the milk in the coconut." This, as has been noted, was the growing aspiration on the part of the Republicans to gain control of the government through the anti-slavery reform, or any other means that could be made to serve the purpose of Republicanizing the new territory. Their political shrewdness and sagacity told them that the abolition doctrine was a strong if not the strongest plank in their platform. Votes for social reforms of any nature can be easily secured and this one had been surcharged in some section of the North with numerous melodramatic features. Voting for a measure, however, and fighting for it were entirely different things.

Southern leaders were just as determined to Democratize the country as were the Republicans to claim it for their own. The Republican schemers had for these formative years the astute and gifted Seward, beginning then to be an international figure, to guide them, a mind not interested one

whit in the abolition movement only as a means to further Republican supremacy—a task in which he was ardent and untiring. In an almost satirical manner he acknowledged its influence in sustaining that party. The reformers demanded it and the party would profit by it. Seward had taught in the South and was on home ground when he teasingly told Varina, who in a frank and engaging manner questioned his position during a visit to her husband, that he did not believe in any of "these appeals, as you call them, but they are potent to affect the rank and file of the North."[1] Other politicians beside Seward finding that the abolition of slavery had its appeal throughout the New England States and to some extent in the West favored it as a means of permanently establishing the Republican party, a thing now determined on. All issues had their contributing momentum and all were made to work together to enthrone the party in power. Once enthroned it will have to be admitted by the historian that it made scant effort to bring about a wise and amicable settlement of the National controversy which resulted in the national crucifiction. Still to its credit it little dreamed that the black cloud of disunion lowering above the Nation was soon to burst into the ruthless storm.

Jefferson Davis has been accused of bringing on secession, even of instigating it, but no record exists that proves anything further than that he, like all States' Rights men from Calhoun down, helped it along by contending for that principle. Time and time again he had reminded the Republican senators that the South was only demanding her rights and privileges under the compact between the states; was alone contending for the right of the states to regulate their domestic affairs subject to the Constitution and not to Congress; that her position was a constitutional one and

[1] *A Memoir*, Vol. I.

could alone be legally readjusted by constitutional amendment.

The thoughtful mind has only to study Jefferson Davis' position during the abortive work of the Committee of Thirteen and his candid advice to the Editor of the Charleston *Mercury* relative to the secession of South Carolina to recognize that there was no revolutionary spirit of leadership on his part, but a sincere desire to adjust matters in justice to the Southern section. With this he would have been content. However, he was not from some slight inherent numbness always able to make himself understood; and little as it appears on the surface, there was much in the temperament and state of mind of Jefferson Davis and Abraham Lincoln that was similar—an isolation that was at times painful, never overcoming, but obscuring the warmer tints of an inward beauty and coming of much thought and early loneliness. There was, however, nothing pallid in the inner lives of either.

A close study of all Congressional records indicates clearly that Jefferson Davis made innumerable efforts to reconcile the extremes of both parties taking the position of Webster whom he intensely admired and with whom he agreed in many things that there should be no North and no South but a united country. He had little to gain personally in secession. His prestige was already fixed and a long tenure of high office was insured. Unlike many great party leaders he was held in high esteem by his opponents, and his contemporaries testify to a more conciliatory spirit on his part at this period than that of many of the great leaders of both parties.

But controversy had now grown to be heated, tangled and puzzling; there was no supreme leadership and everything

moved steadily in the direction of secession. The Thirty-sixth Congress was to witness the dissolution of the American Union. Of the coteries of brilliant intellects that had gathered for social diversion in the offices and parlors of the southern contingent in Congress only southern leaders were now seen. Southern men and women of all classes also gathered to themselves. In Washington, society had drawn the secession lines before Congress would acknowledge that it was possible, though debate, it is true, continued wild and unrestrained. But, bitter as was the spirit of that body it still put from it the thought of secession. It did not like the word. True, Delaware had asked for a dissolution of the Union and it had never been regarded by New England as an impossible right and on several occasions she had threatened it. Even in 1860-61 such strong New England leaders as Horace Greeley foreseeing the consequences of the widespread, deep and bitter discension of contending forces preferred peaceful separation. "Let the South go" was his proclamation for several months at least, and the Richmond Dispatch had hurled back the answer "The South can go." Anything was better than war had been Greeley's admonition. But war could but follow under existing conditions, and historians were in future to strive to prove, some that it was caused by Abraham Lincoln others that it was caused by Jefferson Davis. When in truth it was the result of a long and bitter controversy and feud, that reached down and fastened itself upon the people, a controversy and feud that no one man on either side was strong enough to settle and wipe out. The shedding of blood alone in such cases will satisfy. During the final days leading up to secession one small light shown as a rift in the clouds when Justice seemed about to have its way.

The prophetic year of 1860 was fast coming to a close when on December 24 the famous Committee of Thirteen was appointed. It discussed a new solution of the National quarrel known as the Crittenden Compromise which covered the whole vexed controversy between the estranged sections. Lincoln, and he himself was getting better acquainted with the altruistic element in the question, soon discovered that he would have to keep faith with the reformers of New England, or else, have to carry a load as heavy as the Pyramids. He now eased away from his original position "Preserve the Union and you can do with slavery what you will" and went to the extreme position of "no compromise whatever" which attitude recorded in written language and flung in the face of a stubborn and already irritated South convinced it that there was no longer an opportunity for any adjustment of the National controversy. But believing that the tired and already disgusted Seward would have succumbed and wiped his hands of the whole matter had he not been informed of Lincoln's "no compromise" advice, would Wade and Grimes and others have agreed to as much of it as would have satisfied the South? The Compromise found much favor throughout the North, especially in New York, and the South generally was pleased with it, though South Carolina it is clear had already reached the breaking point where she preferred independence. Its failure could hardly be laid at Seward's door, full tired of the controversy. And to Lincoln's mind secession was about as remote a contingency as could possibly have existed, though, and it is admitted by most historians, he hurried it forward and by the same unyielding methods that the Rhetts, Toombs, Yanceys, Jefferson Davis, and others pursued in the controversy.

Jefferson Davis thought he saw in the provisions of the Crittenden Compromise, once adopted, a solution and settlement of the whole matter, but was fast losing hope that a satisfactory agreement would ever be reached when the Republican members refused to support it.

Amid intemperate speeches, propositions and threats of a varied nature the news flashed like a thunder bolt across the country, that South Carolina had left the Union. Her representation had already in a proud and determined spirit withdrawn from Congress, but the North did not dream as proud and independent as they knew the spirit of that State to be that she was ready to take the fatal step. Any great hope of an amicable adjustment was fading even before South Carolina's withdrawal and the argument to a large extent at Washington was considered exhausted on the failure of the Committee to accept the Crittenden Compromise. With this failure—and it is not easy to think that South Carolina already out of Congress would have remained in the Union had it been accepted, a manifesto was sent abroad from the Southern representatives in Congress, the most striking clause of which said "we are satisfied that the safety and honor of the Southern people require the organization of a Southern Confederacy." It was now that the disgusted Seward, along with a number of other strong-willed Republicans, felt that they had been playing with fire. More letters to his wife indicated his disgust and weariness of the whole situation. New York editors began calling for more moderation on the part of the Republican party in adjusting matters of government. Boston whose people of the commercial classes had many interests involved was denunciatory of the whole abolition movement. But with South Carolina's proud act secession was already accomplished with the influential

and brilliant Rhetts and every soul in the Palmetto State defending its action and making plans for a separate government. Seeing no possible chance of adjustment, and knowing the spirit of both sections, Jefferson Davis now gave his time in the Senate to the defense of the attitude of South Carolina; though he had advised against her speedy withdrawal he felt that she had the right on her side. She had made her choice and the sentiment in the main of the entire South was with her. The "fire eaters" of Georgia were blazing with the spirit of resistance. Alexander H. Stephens to his regret was noting the popular desire for secession on the part of the people and it is not until the people are stirred that revolutions take place.

To the astonishment of Southern leaders, these found that President Buchanan, whose message on account of its denial of the right of secession had not pleased some, was being influenced by the strong Union men of his cabinet and was not acting in good faith with his former position. His lackadaisical manner—hedging and beating about in the air, from both Democratic and Republican standpoints has been severely criticized by a brilliant historian.[1] But if the war was 'inevitable,' as this same historian believes a different action on the part of the cornered and perplexed President, belabored on all sides in the matter of the evacuation of Fort Sumpter now claimed by South Carolina, would have availed little. Still had he pleased the Republicans *in toto*, it might have won him a small mead at least of the praise Northern historians bestow so lavishly upon Lincoln.

In the instance of Jefferson Davis no one for an instant could conceive of him not taking a stand with his own sec-

[1] *History of the United States* by James Ford Rhodes, Vol. III, p. 286.

tion at so vital a crisis, much as he might have regretted the necessity for her action. That he did regret it and was ready at any moment to have accepted the Crittenden Compromise as a solution of the whole matter is too patent to admit of doubt.

Varina who had left the discussion of all such weighty matters to her husband, content to be his intelligent confident, believing that his every act was above criticism and naturally more interested in many things in life other than governmental matters, was now finding much else besides the lighter vein in all this grave business of life. It was true that her "little darlings," as she was in the habit of calling her children—there were now three of them, the baby having been named Joseph for the elder brother of her husband, took up much of her time. But she missed the good will and pleasant excitement of past days when both Democrats and Republicans met together for social entertainment. The change affected her and in a different way than it did her husband. He had filled his life with a few great things and did not require so much diversion; she had accepted eagerly the many little joys it offered and the sudden break in these were new experiences for her.

Among other slights they were now receiving from various sources the coolness with which President Buchanan had received her husband during the winter had greatly disturbed her since she liked very much that capable and experienced but temporizing and undecided head of the government and continued to do so in later years.[1] His daily concessions however to the Republicans were noted by her as were all the movements of both parties.

Her thought was now more intensely centered upon public

[1] *A Memoir,* Vol. I.

affairs. True, naturally to any convictions that she might hold she had associated too closely with one who had made a fetich of his not to view with some scorn the compliant or the inconsistent.

For the first time in her life Varina found herself disliking people—"actually hating them" she laughingly told her friends in Natchez. There was Seward, about whose oddities and eccentricities and beak-like physiognomy she had always made merry, she would not bring herself to hate him at first, but as he began to be numbered with the enemies of her husband and the South her liking cooled for him. Even to the last, however, she recalled with appreciation his tender solicitude for her sick husband, and could smile at a certain sardonic humor which he at times let fall when everything was overspread with gloom.[1]

Her feelings wounded constantly, and she had been accustomed to little else but good will and praise, even flattery, she carried her head higher in these last dreadful days that had overtaken the country than had ever been her manner, dressed more carefully and cultivated a more reserved mien and bearing. But with this she sometimes found her self-control and poise about which she had always boasted, breaking down under the heavy strain and tension to which she was daily being subjected. Her devotion to her husband always the controlling impulse of her life grew stronger and more noticeable in outward expression. She sprang to meet him eagerly, passionately, on his return from the capitol and hovered about him constantly. Sometimes she found herself weeping bitterly as she watched his last patient efforts in behalf of reconciliation. Disciplined with constant public service and not as impassioned and fervid in expression as he had

[1] Seward has been quoted as having said in substance that withdrawing from Congress got to be a prominent feature of the day's work.

been in younger life, he had hoped to the verge of wide separation that some benign, outstanding gesture on the part of the North would touch the heart of the South and heal the breach. In this hope Varina shared fervently. That she was quick-tempered all had discovered but animosity did not remain with her, had no fixed hold upon her nature. Any slight, however, or wrong he suffered from others was and had always been felt keenly by her, and in extreme cases resented. All her thoughts were now centered on him; her heart ached as she saw the deep lines settling in his handsome face. Not even her children on whom she lavished such deep affection and for whom she cared to a great extent with her own hands though there were nurses and maids in plenty—not even the young sisters and brothers to whom she was devoted could engage her attention long during the hours he spent at home.

With all their public cares and interests they had remained lovers and homekeepers and what even in that staid period was called old-fashioned in their views of the married state. For them it held no disillusion. Let life bring them what it may they would have this much left to them at least—that of finding both pleasure and comfort in each other's society. To her in hours of tender solicitude he was "Banny," a fanciful name that she had given him in her youth, as women do the world over for the objects of their affection. He had continued to call her by the winsome name of Winnie one that with them was to become a family name.

CHAPTER XLI

SOUTH CAROLINA INVITES THE OTHER SOUTHERN STATES TO JOIN HER IN SECESSION

It is a safe conclusion, at least in deference to historical sequence it can well be said, that if South Carolina had not entered upon secession, and that without a dissenting vote, no other Southern State would have taken the initiative, however just it may have felt its cause for so doing nor however much the people may have desired independence. No state in the Republic except possibly Virginia wielded as much outside influence as did this proud, self-confident member. She had always appealed to the wealthy gentry of the lower South; had sent whole communities to settle it in spots. Her Scotch and Huguenot blood was flowing in the veins of hundreds of settlers of the new Southern States. Her place in colonial history, her superior culture, her wealth, her social prestige, her brilliant statesmen, writers, and newspaper men had all fascinated the aspiring, social circles of the younger Southern States. Now that she was being forced to assert the rights she had retained in her pledge to the Union, and had sundered the bond that enslaved her, one by one, they cast their destiny with her, proud to march under any banner she raised, to be her satellites, not only in full agreement with her, but believing that any path she would choose was a safe enough one to follow. Old St. Michael's resolute notes for the second time rang out in revolt against tyranny, had reached the gulf shores and had

set the hearts of the people on fire. The *palmetto* had now become a symbol that made men's hearts leap. Huge bonfires shot up everywhere and in many places people spent their time at public meetings in rejoicing, of a varied nature, and in making many speeches in which at every paragraph they shouted, "Our American forefathers," while their children rode the slim young sapling trees and sang such songs as,

"I'll take my stand in Dixie Land,[1]
And kill old Lincoln if I can."

To her sister States throughout the South from the eastern border to the extreme western, to hasten their action, South Carolina sent her famous appeal. First came—and blank consternation filled the public mind at Washington, Mississippi, Florida and Alabama, then Georgia and Louisiana. That others would soon follow could not be doubted, nor could one doubt that Virginia would withdraw since her attitude in the Union had always been one somewhat of a dictatorial nature and to some extent condescending. Her numerous causes for so doing may be traced in any impartial history of the period. It is true that many of her leaders desired a settlement of the controversy. It is however, generally conceded that after several attempts at a general peace convention which the Republicans did not attend the act of President Lincoln in calling for seventy-five thousand troops with which to invade the South, decided the question of secession for her. Much too of her population was already clamoring for separation, and demonstrations of joy

[1] This was sung by many young Southern children during the war, but the author is not sure that it was sung this early.

were held in Richmond, Norfolk and Portsmouth on the secession of South Carolina.

Throughout the Southern States in the ranks of the people disunion was now the paramount sentiment. "In New Orleans," writes Mr. Rhodes, "much enthusiasm characterized the reception of the news that South Carolina had seceded. An actor announced it from the stage of the Varieties Theatre, and such enthusiasm prevailed that it broke up the evening entertainment. The audience after venting its glee in the theatre, rushed into the street and assisted at an impromtu meeting, at which the Marseillaise was played, zealous speeches in favor of the secession of Louisiana were delivered, and a bust of Calhoun, decked with the cockade, was exhibited."[1] In the other Cotton States the sentiment was just as strong. If secession was a conspiracy we agree with Mr. Rhodes that it was an open one and engaged in by a whole people, which is very unusual. If his contention for the rights of the South Jefferson Davis helped along secession it was owing to the complication and misfortune of a controversy and not a desire on his part. In the last convention dealing with the subject in Mississippi he was among the few who advised delay.

In the North, Seward, Belmont and others were advising moderation, but not even Seward's powerful and conciliatory speech of January 12 in which he favored compromise of some nature could stem the flood, could convince Northern leaders and abolitionist or sooth the spirit of revolt abroad in the South. A mutual hostility now as much as anything invited if it did not invoke the storm, and neither side dreamed what the winds were bringing them.

When Mississippi telegraphed her decision to the National

[1] History of the United States by James Ford Rhodes, Vol. III.

Capital her representation in Congress suppressing their excitement gathered in earnest consultation with that of Alabama and Florida, and the full representation of the three states decided to announce the action taken by their states and withdraw at the same time in a body.

Varina no less than her husband was now at the highest pitch of excitement. While both suffered intensely because of their high-strung, emotional natures she more than the husband was demonstrative and unrestrained in their private discussions. She told friends in Natchez in after days that it was about this time she felt that changes were taking place in her nature; that there was a "drying up process of hope and fraternity going on in her whole being."[1] Life had been so bountiful and had made such a strong appeal to her in the past that she had never questioned its liabilities. She was now confronting some of its penalties. Still her mood was a gallant one, would always be and such spirits invariably retrieve their losses with the disappearance of the cause.

Her husband's public position had always been one of much concern to her; it now filled her with the deepest anxiety. That his resignation from the Senate in open session was about to take place filled her with excitement and perturbation, bordering on a nervous collapse. She who had been for the greater part in life well, happy, confident, even light-hearted was now becoming, though only a little past girlhood, a careworn woman. It had been noised through the city that his resignation and farewell speech would take place in open session in the senate on the twenty-first of January and the news was on every tongue. He was very attractive to the people of Washington; they had always gathered, both men and women, to hear his scholarly speeches

[1] Conversations with descendants of contemporaries.

in debate, comparing his rare intellect and culture with that of Webster and Calhoun, and nothing occurring during these lowering days excited them more than the announcement that he was about to withdraw from the United States Congress and join the seceding South. Despite their differences, deep seated and at times bitter, he numbered many friends among the Northern representation. The Massachusetts contingent had in most instances been drawn to him, charmed by his erudition, singular earnestness of conviction, fine bearing and quiet dignity. Others admired him personally and sought intimate association with him. Seward, after a visit to him when sick, telling Varina with "moist eyes" "I could not bear to see him maimed and disfigured; he is a splendid embodiment of manhood and he must not lose his eye."

There was fear among his intimates that he would not be physically able to speak on the day that had been set for his withdrawal and his physician advised against the effort. But the eager, excited throng gathering in the galleries and halls of the Nation's Capital building were not to be disappointed.

Varina knew what immense crowds unusual events brought to the Senate chamber and sent her servant as early as seven o'clock to hold a seat for herself and a friend. She often gave her seat to a visitor, but on this occasion she felt that she must be in her place. She was early up and tastefully dressed in black, her large dark eyes glowing with carefully guarded fires never before seen in them. By the time she had arrived at the Capital the entire space in the reporters gallery and every available nook and corner were filled to overflowing with both men and women, heedless for the moment of all else save the one object of getting and holding a seat. Vast throngs were to be seen everywhere

and the galleries, cloak rooms, and doorways glowed with myriads of colors; passageways were crowded with sofas and chairs and when these could not be secured "men and women leaned against the wall or even sat on the floor."[1] It took some time for the moving throng to become quiet, the stir, salutations and choosing of seats making the scene look more like a festive occasion than a revolution. Such a thought came to Varina causing her to shiver like a leaf in winter winds as she gazed upon the surging mass of humanity, wondering if they understood what was really taking place. They little knew that the calm, pale-faced man who stood before them had not slept for nights, that the woman so still and white had come from a tear stained vigil.[2]

Not only upon the stern, sad face of the speaker announcing his determination to stand by his own State and Section in their declaration of freedom from a bond that had grown too irksome and bitter for longer endurance but upon herself she felt curious eyes at times turned. First from hauteur to pity her expression changed as a finger would be thrust forward to designate her in the crowd. In the main she was calm, composed, like one in a trammelled dream, endeavoring to suppress she told friends any show of painful agitation and surprise. And could she ever be surprised at anything again? Every word of the farewell speech reached her ears and burned in her mind to become one of its most indelible memories. Every graceful gesture of the impassioned speaker; every shade of thought on the faces of the people whether of disapproval or approval—nothing escaped her. Wherever a cold eye was turned upon him—God help her she prayed inaudibly, to bear it—her own ferreted it out. Did they around him know what he was suffering? Had

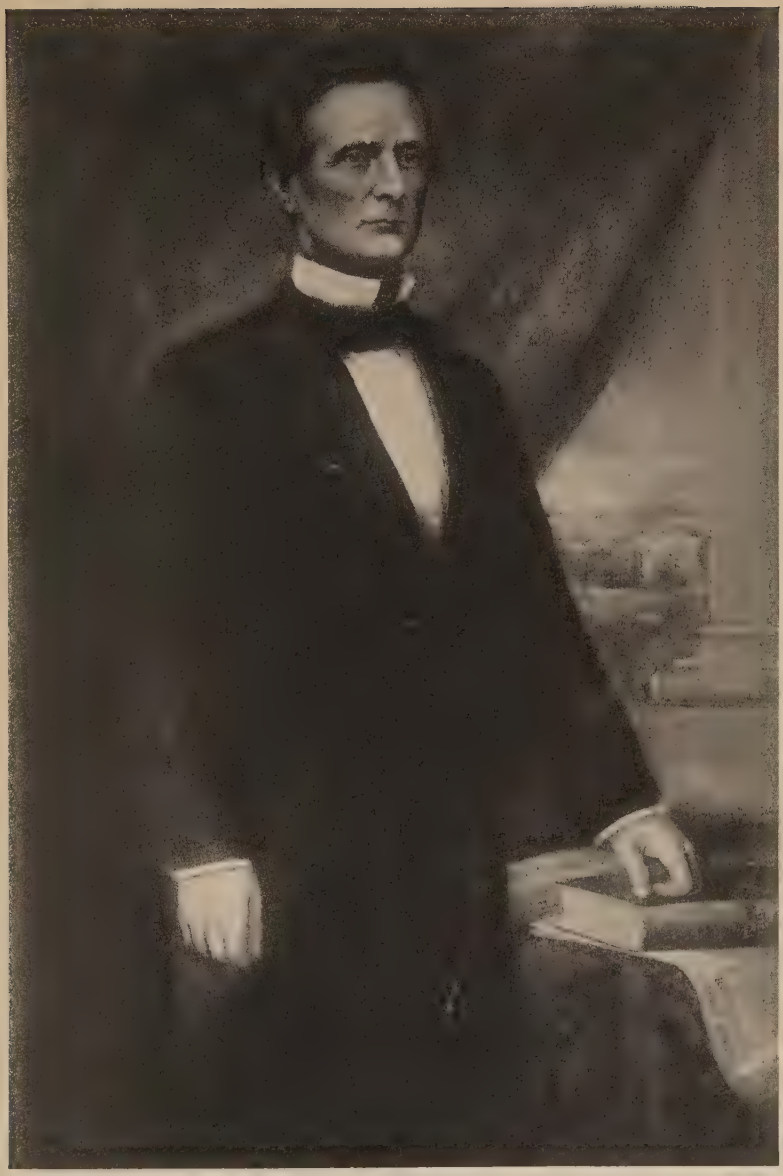
[1] *A Memoir,* Vol. I.
[2] Conversations with friends at Natchez.

they ever known? Did they know that while they slept, he had agonized over the country's sad plight through sleepless nights—he who had already rendered it more constant and valuable service for his age than any public man it claimed; and even at this late hour would not have rejected the olive branch? All such questions she kept asking herself, in the manner that people do who feel that they have been misunderstood.

Next to the speaker none in the vast audience was more alive to what was going on than the woman who had kept watch with him the long night through. Her mind seemed to be like a camera, swiftly receiving words, objects, and scenes as living pictures that would never fade. In long years afterwards she could describe the scene to the minutest detail. As the impassioned voice of the speaker reached the outer tiers of the vast crowd it was with relief that she saw their faces change from interest and curiosity to intense thought. Both men and women of both parties and of all classes leaned forward to catch each word. Responding to the genuine feeling they recognized in his utterances they choked with emotion, their eyes filling with tears. Many wept outright, and as he continued scarcely a dry eye was to be seen in the vast audience. No longer curious, no longer cold or critical they sat dumb in full realization of the catastrophe that had overtaken the country.

He seemed eye witnesses have said, to be not only as one speaking for himself, but the voice of a whole people crying out through his words for that Justice that should prevail among men. He was never a popular orator, and had none of the tricks of the demagogue, but was gifted with a power that stirred men's hearts.

As Varina turned away from the scene, unreal to her still,



Jefferson Davis

AS MEMBER OF THE CABINET.

the knowledge that the audience had wept was the only thought that soothed her perturbed mind. Silently the great packed masses dissolved into a moving stream to break into little bevies and groups and make their way nervously from the Senate Chamber, as if each wanted to get away to be alone and think. But the silence did not continue long. So soon as the crowd had reached the corridors and exits, with the realization of what had taken place, people began to talk breathlessly, hysterically and soon amid the various comments were heard words of censure epithets and even curses: "A damn secessionist," "a black-hearted traitor," flashed bitterly and raucously through the air. With tight, set lips she drew herself up haughtily, her eyes flashing, for was she not the granddaughter of one who had followed old Andrew Jackson for this same country and descended from one who had ridden hard with Washington in defense of its liberty? Search the records of the Colonies of America and the Grahams and Kempes and Howells had been Governors and rulers since the first councils. She who had come of the best colonial Virginia and New Jersey ancestry could in all conscience be excused for the anger that flamed upon her face as she turned a contemptuous glance upon those who denounced her husband—who denounced her section. She had kept her poise through it all better than most women would have done, her pale face white at times as a cloth shining among all that sea of faces, a visitor from Natchez said, "like some fixed star."

But now as she turned away from the great building and sought the street, with the hideous ephithets and denunciations ringing in her ears, she felt her whole being harden. She would never weep again, never lie awake at nights breathlessly listening to her husband discussing vain com-

promises. Compromise! Reconciliation!—how empty the words sounded. No, she would henceforth be as hard and souless as she once had playfully accused Seward of being. All the softness seemed to be drying up in her body. She would no longer give thought to the pleasant city which had been her home the greater part of her life. She would forget its pleasant streets and friendly houses and once happy people; and the man who had given up friends, position, ambition and all to cast his destiny with the fate of his own people, would find her equally as ardent.[1]

Many had commented on the pale set face in the Senate Chamber, the dark, sorrowful eyes. The intense light in them now spoke plainly of what the heart and soul were enduring. As she gained the open, smiling Southern faces, she says, appeared all about her and many words of commendation and admiration of her husband fell on her ear. She did not wait for him feeling as she often had gayly said that wives were in their husbands' way at certain times. Her quick intuition and fine sensibilities told her that others —men on grave and important business—were claiming his attention now; she would go home and wait for him there. Amid all the tumult that swept and tortured her a certain relief slightly of elation filled her heart. The manifesto had gone forth. The long suspense was at last at an end—the South was free.

Still she could not accommodate her mind to the situation, and when she reached home for the first time in life she said she found herself "an utterly hopeless and miserable woman." The world swam before her arrested gaze in huge, broken masses while irrelevant things crowded in between—

[1] Conversations with contemporaries who were intimate with Mrs. Davis at that period of her life.

Maggie was telling little Jeff about the boats on the Mississippi—dinner had not been ordered—and they had called her husband and all the South *traitors*. How hideous the word sounded,—was she dreaming or awake?

Anyone can hurl ephithets, her husband, she says, assured her through the long night that followed; the only thing worth while in life is for one to perform one's duty as one feels it to be. And she in turn thinking it would prove some slight solace told him of the tears that the people had shed and of all the kind words that admiring friends had said about him that day. Her conversations with friends often gives glimpses of their mutual sympathy in hours of great trial and distress.[1]

Next day while walking with her children and their nurse, a habit she had and one in which she found much pleasure, she says that she met various people and among them a number of the wives of the Republican members of Congress, all of whom stopped to chat with her and pet her children. The Davis children, Maggie, little Jeff, and the baby Joe were known everywhere in Washington and were pets of many of the prominent families of both parties.

She had lived all her life except the first eighteen years of girlhood in the National Capital and knew many people in all classes and spheres of life; was known to all the laborers and servants in her neighborhood as "Miss Varina," and these felt proud of the fact that she knew them and spoke to them whenever she met them.[2] In these last sorrowful days she treasured every small act of kindness shown either her husband or herself. Her warm responsive nature was too

[1] Confidences with contemporaries.

[2] Conversations with contemporaries. Gov. Robert Lowery, Col. Charles E. Hooker and others.

civilized to harbor animosity, resent as she might for the time given the bitter attacks that were being made on her section, and in these last days upon her husband personally. As the days passed and numerous delicate courtesies were extended her from various sources that kept aloof as yet from the strife her heart softened and she began to realize that these were the people among whom she had spent her life.

It was certain that she would be missed, and in Republican as well as Democratic circles since she had been conspicuous for open house hospitality and had made little difference in extending invitations. People of every class liked her, for her gayety, and good humor and more for her great naturalness and ability to make the most of any situation. Women were often heard to say that "going with Mrs. Jefferson Davis always meant to have a good time." To educated, well-bred men she was equally attractive; stylish and always carefully dressed and companionable, they liked to be seen talking to her amid the great throngs that crowded the halls of the Capitol building. While she met them in a frank, engaging manner, not one felt the slightest inclination to treat her with undue gallantry. In any crowd where women were standing she was sure to be offered the first seat by some gentleman who had discovered the situation. This she often gave to some infirm or elderly person, such small courtesies having been early impressed upon her in a social atmosphere that in her childhood home was differential in the extreme, a survival of the Court of Gayoso whose punctilio had been absorbed by the English population fixed before his arrival.[1]

From a purely selfish standpoint she, as well as her hus-

[1] Spanish Governor of Natchez, 1795. It is said that the Spanish Court left its impress deeply on the manners of the English Colonial Colony of the Natchez country.

band, was risking much in this sudden change in her fortunes. No woman had been more distinguished in official circles nor had attracted a more brilliant company around her. That her life had now changed from one of content and comfort to one filled with anxiety and uncertainty not alone for herself but for those she loved is a hard fact of which any one could but be conscious. Had she yielded to the urge purely of self and self-interest she might have, in view of the undue influence over her husband that her critics have invested her with, persuaded him to let their pleasant lives stand—leave her to comfort and her many friends, himself and family to future prospects of no small worth. But no, Varina herself had withdrawn from the Union and it is doubtful if any woman in the South gave up as much as she parted with in leaving it.

CHAPTER XLII

THE RETURN SOUTH

That Varina Howell Davis, as well as Jefferson Davis, was fully acquainted with the secession movement in the South is not for a moment to be doubted. No woman of her high public position, intellectual breadth, knowledge of political parties and close relation to one of the most commanding figures in National affairs could have remained oblivious, or even in partial ignorance, of the shape that governmental policies and problems were taking throughout the Union. Again it may be asked, as necessary to an interpretation of her own attitude, did he knowingly abet and influence secession as he has been insinuated by some Northern historians and critics. If so, Varina must have known his plans and programs. It is not easy to believe that they had any thoughts apart, that either did not understand the others slightest gesture and motivation. She had always been his confident and recognized as an intelligent one; had not only assisted him with his correspondence but had answered many of his important letters. It is not possible that he could have hidden anything from a woman of her keen discernment. In view of all this and of all that has gone before the criticism of a female detractor that she was a "Northern woman" and in sentiment appears ridiculous.[1]

As for the matter of secession it was nowhere covered up but to the contrary heralded to the world through every

[1] "Wives" by Gamaliel Bradford.

newspaper in the South and spontaneously and openly discussed and sanctioned by hundreds of prominent citizens from Virginia to the Gulf Coast. With the masses it had become an obcession. The poor whites with the exception of some isolated mountain spots led the Revolution amid curses and denunciations of Lincoln and the North. Borne of this spirit was that love that drew their bitter tears at its failure.

It was however a day of suspicion and accusation and the public mind had become overstrained, weakened and diseased from long indulgence in that strife that Seward had likened to a state of war.

Jefferson Davis to the Northern mind was the outstanding secessionist and the fact more than anything else that he was placed at the head of the Confederacy centered the North's thought upon him and directed its suspicion toward him, there to fester for many years, to become sane and just again in the realization of a common heritage of valor. All painstaking historians in tracing the movement which had impetus in court decisions, rulings, and resolutions throughout the entire history of the Union and in both sections must view the assumption that either Davis or Lincoln was the sole cause of secession as wholly preposterious. At the very outset of the formation of the Confederacy, South Carolina had hoped to see one of her own brilliant sons placed at the head of the government, and his failure to be recognized for the place made a rift that not only indicated bitter disappointment but created personal relations that continued throughout to be a thorn in the side of the Confederacy.[1] However, the State itself responded perhaps more freely to the demands

[1] Robert Barnwell Rhett, the brilliant editor of the Charleston *Mercury*.

of the Confederacy than any other, which is saying much since all bled themselves white for love of it.

That Jefferson Davis did resent and resist by every known argument the encroachment of federal power in matters of state government is not only attested by the wife in her valiant defense of him in her *Memoir* in which she shows clearly how ardently she herself espoused his political course, but by the great body of Congressional records of that period. Both too contain as many instances of his deep anxiety over the approaching disruption of the Union, a disruption which he believed was imminent with the failure of the Crittenden Compromise.[1]

The fact of his defending the South from imputations of any wrong doing with such ardor and persistency laid him open to suspicion of having largely directed its course. He constantly expressed his hope of adjustment in both speeches and letters; but with the failure of the Committee of Thirteen to function in an intelligent manner, his hopes began to wane and his doubts of the Republicans Party in any matter of justice to the South became fixed in his mind. He felt that the South was fast being driven to desperate measures and was not surprised at the course it had taken under the initiative, leadership and guidance of South Carolina.

But secession was now accomplished and its growth had been more widespread among the inhabitants of the entire region than was supposed. Still here and there could be heard a dissenting voice from a local leader, but hardly in a single instance from the great masses of the people. These were now unanimous for separation. In the State of Mississippi which Jefferson Davis regarded as his home State all

[1] See Rowland's *Jefferson Davis, Constitutionalist, His Letters, Papers, and Speeches.*

legislative proceedings, messages, speeches and public documents of both State officials and prominent citizens clearly indicate that secession, at first not desired, had slowly but surely developed among the people and the influence of no single leader could have dominated the thought of the high-strung impetuous citizenry of the country. The temperament of all classes was very similar—whether gentry or poor white. The inclination to resist any form supposed or otherwise of tyranny became individual and widespread as the revolution advanced. Jefferson Davis nor any other leader could have dictated to them at this juncture. To the contrary they had not for some years liked his conciliatory methods and his advice for further delay, and a vague doubt of his attitude still lingered in their minds that only his withdrawal from the United States Senate wholly dispelled. "He staid up there a little too long among them damn Yankees," a "sand-hill" farmer snarled, "but he's all right now."

While the National Congress was being torn to tatters by fiery disputations one should not forget that the social structure was going through the same ordeal, and especially throughout the South was seething with indignation. Washington nor Adams could ever have freed the Colonies from the Mother Country had not the stern spirit of revolt broken out in the rude log cabins of the hardy pioneer folk throughout the various Colonies. In the Southern revolt women were more demonstrative than their Revolutionary grandmothers had been. That Varina had ever sought to influence her husband in the matter of secession is not a matter of record but it is safe to say that she was a leading spirit with the women of her section in resenting any aggressions upon the South. How she felt towards the secession move-

ment may be had from her own *Memoir* though the sands in the hour glass were diminishing and time with the same ameliorating touch that it lays its hand upon battlefields had soothed and brought her resignation, even forgiveness. Her ardent struggles in defense of it and suffering in its behalf belong to another volume.

During her long residence in Washington she had become to a certain extent cosmopolitan. Long years in a broader and more liberal society had created strong tastes and numerous ties that made an atmosphere congenial to her, even necessary to her happiness. A sense of being at home in the best social and intellectual circles gave to her air and manner a security possessed alone by the *savant*; and there might have been some truth in Mrs. Chestnut's casual observation that she doubtless found her new life as mistress of the White House of the Confederacy rather dull, or words to that effect, after the gay and exciting official life of Washington. It must be granted that having spent almost her entire life in the animated social life of the capital city as a natural consequence its hold upon her had grown very strong. True she was intensely fond of the beautiful cities of Natchez and Vicksburg where society was made up of as daintily bred aristocratic families as one would find anywhere in the South, whose elaborate homes were furnished with rare old Louis XIV furniture and art treasures that came by way of New Orleans from Paris, treasures that in later years became the aspiration of the *nouveau riche* or to be more explicit and perfectly fair to the Babbitt of the household *nonvelle riche*. She, too, was intensely attached to all the magnificent river country with its graceful languor and romantic history; but naturally with such protracted stays in Washington, for both husband and wife even "Brier-

field" had lost much of its vividness as a part of their lives. It was now more often referred to merely as "property on the Mississippi River"—rather proudly it is true for property on the Mississippi, observes a fascile author, had its meaning to ears long accustomed to the complaint of rocky fields and sandy hillsides. It is natural that Varina should have preferred Washington as a permanent home, and with her husband preferred that the Union should stand but not under conditions subversive of constitutional guarantees which insured the safety and welfare of the South. True it was not hard for her to love this Union that her ancestors had helped to create and for which many had died. Her people had all been patriots, were of self-assertive races, and she had been bred in an atmosphere where great freedom of speech was permitted and equally as much devotion to country expressed.

But Varina herself had changed. The young creature galloping over the level roads from "The Hurricane" to "Brierfield" in the rain during her husband's absence in Mexico to confer with the good James Pemberton about the sudden break in the levee, bore little resemblance to the tall, queenly, handsomely gowned young woman receiving the Nation's highest dignitaries in her beautiful and tastefully arranged drawing-room. Her wit, charm and merriment and numerous accomplishments made it easy about this time for a contemporary when referring to brilliant members of Washington society to mention her as "one of the most brilliant women of her time greatly sought by cultivated men and women."[1] Down in Charleston, that acme of exclusiveness and elegance, Mrs. James Chestnut, too, who was to come into such close and loving contact with her in after years was

[1] "Reminiscences of War and Peace" by Mrs. R. A. Pryor. p. 81.

telling bright little stories of her social triumphs. At a later day a celebrated historian, with few criticisms of his very own, paints a strong and fascinating portrait of her with Elizabethan, Victorian and Andromachean touches throughout.[1]

Jefferson Davis, too, had been happy in Washington. He "was resigning," the wife wrote, "an office which, of all others, was the most congenial to his taste, and conducive to the increase of his reputation. He anticipated a long and exhausting war, and knew that his property in cotton planting would be utterly destroyed in the course of the impending conflict. Deeply depressed and supremely anxious, he made his preparations to go home."

It cannot be for a moment doubted that they had made for themselves a warm place in the social life of Washington. One gets a pleasing impression from her *Memoir* of the ease with which they mingled with the distinguished men and women of that day. And in all that brilliant company they had gathered about them, Varina felt that she took no mean place. To tear themselves away from this congenial atmosphere, and array themselves against all the influences that had contributed so much to their happiness, social prestige and success was no light step to contemplate, at least for a woman who was of a day when social life meant for them nearly everything, and a career lessened their social importance. The average woman would not have looked forward to such a change without giving some thought to the effect that it would have directly upon her own life. But Varina was no average woman. Although she had more, it is patent, to give up in her removal from the only permanent home she had known since her early marriage than the wife

[1] "Wives" by Gamaliel Bradford.

of any public official, she was now capable of complete self-effacement in the great crisis. She writes in her *Memoir*. "To wrench oneself from the ties of fifteen years is a most distressing effort. Our friends had entered into our joys and sorrows with unfailing sympathy. We had shared their anxieties and seen their children grow from infancy to adolescence. To bid them farewell, perhaps to meet in the near future with a 'great gulf between us,' was 'death in life.'" But she would continue by the man's side. With the same confidence the same loyalty, the same passionate devotion that she had given him in the past she would face the future. Her faith in him was of no light quality. It would have been difficult for her to have doubted his righteous intention even if she had not shared his opinions and beliefs, and her love for her section was no whit less than his. "I am unwilling needlessly to antagonize any part of the country but I love my own with a devotion proportionate to the great sacrifice made in its behalf," she recorded long after her youth had passed.

But with all this one can feel the deep pathos of the confession. "We left Washington exceedingly sorrowful and took our three little children with us."

She was leaving a city in which she had witnessed her sweetest triumphs, full of interesting people, a pleasant city that had grown to be home to her, a city of which she was proud to claim as a home, was now leaving it for conscience sake, with their name on every lap, and her shrewd discernment made her know that it was frequently coupled with anthemas. Still she did not falter.

There had been rumors that it was the purpose of the government to arrest any members of Congress who left Washington on account of the secession of the state they

represented, but the threat came to nought as a weak move on the part of the Republican party about which there had already been much unfavorable comment even in its own ranks as to the lack of moderation, if not the vast assumption of power being exercised by the Government in State and individual matters.

Always of a delicate physique Jefferson Davis, though not in good health at the time remained in Washington with his family a week after his withdrawal from the Senate and during the time he was daily visited by Southern delegations composed of such ardent and determined spirits as Clement C. Clay, John B. Floyd, and James Chestnut, also Captain Semmes and Commodore Shubrie which indicated the wide spread hold secession had taken on the South. With the vain hope Varina records in other words that the party in power would hold out an olive branch of some nature he spent his nights exhausted and sleepless.[1]

But nothing came to the sick man during the last weeks he spent in the city that indicated that there would be any action taken by the Republicans leading to the reopening of the controversy as a final effort to recall the seceding states. And believing now that secession was the only remedy for the situation he set his face hard towards the future. Varina says that depressed and anxious they now made their preparations to leave Washington, determined to share the fate of their people. The inevitable had come and she and her husband were returning to the South—the arrogant, overweening South, so the North believed, teeming with riches, but immensely rich only in spots, where the cotton growing gentry resided in wide valleys and deltas along alluvial streams, but prosperous everywhere with a rich planter folk

[1] *A Memoir*, Vol. II, note p. 3.

dwelling in big, badly constructed white houses kept under the supervision of home-loving women by partially trained house servants, lately the gibbering natives of Africa now going through their first stage of civilization. Peace and plenty had created an atmosphere that shone and glittered and one for the greater part kindly and genuine. It seemed, indeed, a region where as historians have remarked an empire could be founded, and many in Washington believed it would be. Varina, though unconsciously, fitted in with the scheme of things more naturally than did the man. With her, wealth and high position had been an inheritance; with him, to a large extent, such things had been acquired, and now used only as a means to the larger purpose for the future of his people, both white and black.

The question now with the people of the South after secession was whether they would or would not be left in peace to work out their own salvation. They had their rosy dreams of ultimate success. Sustained by the cotton, tobacco, and sugar, and the slaves who helped to produce these—they were to lay strong foundation in which the small planter—the poor whites—and the black folk, not yet ready, were to share in their turn, as each could grasp privileges and opportunities. There were more white laborers in the South at that day than some Northern historians have been willing to admit, nearly every plantation having several white families upon it besides the broad areas on which there were none but poor white and these owned their own homes. It is an historical misconception that the slaves alone were the agricultural laborers of the South.

Though something of a feudal aristocracy in spots, the new region was democratic in many respects. Unmolested its people now felt that they could establish a Southern Re-

public, superior in every way to the Northern. But the North was getting rich too—hence strong. Railway systems and giant factories and a thousand other indications of progress were making her as arrogant and as haughty in her own way as the South. Both sections were now prosperous, and self-confident. Jefferson Davis felt that one would never tamely submit to the other since he had not intimately known men of the Wade, Grimes, Yancey, and Toombs type for naught, though none of these he believes wanted war.

In these days Varina remained constantly by the side of her husband. As in the past there was scarcely a thought in the mind of one that was not known to the other. As they journeyed farther down, past Virginia and the Carolinas on down, down through the middle South, they found the people more familiar with secession, its import and consequences than they had supposed. They also found them indignant and excited. For generations they had been predicting it even threatening it, in both the North and the South, but not really believing it would ever come, not wholly at first desiring it, for the Union that the Constitution had created was very dear to them. But now that the North through Congressional powers had assumed the right to lay down the law to the South that greatest of all bonds had ceased to be binding and there had been nothing left but separation. Too, it is certain that with the mutual contempt and disrespect, no longer concealed, which was even more trying than the political differences between them, the two could no longer walk the same path. "Miserable Pharisees!", "Hypocrits!", "Bigots!", "Witch Burners!" were the choice ephithets hurled by the Southerners at their Northern brothers. "Braggarts," "Boasters," "Slave drivers," "Lord of Slavonia," were the taunts tossed back. Allowing much

for anger they had sized each other up pretty well. The ego of both was pronounced for the American mind at that period, which fortunately as a redeeming trait had not acquired the desire for exploitation, was individualist and self-centered in the extreme. Though one may have to run away from some octogenarian or some body or other to save ones head, it is an observation here that—nor was it merely phenomena—the braggadocio and exaggerated self-importance of the Southern nature and the bigotry, and cant of the New England mind of that day were too pronounced for historians of today to ever succeed in wholly veneering it. Still, the pessimist might say that it was better than much one witnesses at the present in the accumulated vulgarities and grotesqueries of organization's kings and queens. In view of Adamic limitations, it is better perhaps to view both periods with the Mona Lisa smile which seems to say, "admitting much, one must be kind." Nor are we blind to the fact that with all that we have laid up against them, both the Cavalier and the Puritan had, and what is left of them still have, hidden somewhere in their make-up the precious leaven. And so may we not believe has all humanity?

Varina and her husband did not at times have a peaceful journey South. At every stopping place even places not numbering more than three hundred inhabitants a speech was demanded of the man of whose outstanding strength in the nation they had constantly heard for fifteen years. After numerous efforts in which her half sick husband was becoming exhausted, she decided to take some of the responsibility upon herself as to the speech making and it is easy to believe that she was in the full confidence of the conductor in his little intrigue in behalf of the speaker. The secessionist might rant and rail as much as they liked but

precisely at the right moment he kept his promise. "Never mind, when we stop at the next two or three stations I'll blow off steam." If this constituted meddling in her husband's affairs Varina meddled a great deal throughout their long, eventful lives. Pollard might have objected, had he been present, but it is possible that she, then a happier hearted woman than when he knew her, would have laughed him out of countenance. Her husband had been often sick throughout his public life, a fact with which one becomes acquainted throughout her *Memoir.* To watch over him and guard his health that he might remain fit for the heavy responsibilities she daily saw him assuming grew upon her through the years, amounting almost to an obscession. Her own comfort she had a way of ignoring, easily adapting herself to new situations, but his she must never neglect a moment. Seeing how much she enjoyed comfort and ease and how clear-cut was her own individuality the conformity and harmony of their thought and purpose throughout life were remarkable. That there was conflict of opinion at times no one who studies their temperament could deny, not certainly the historian seeking for the truth, but as publicly as they lived their lives had there been much of this there would be some documentary evidence of it left behind. The general absence of it is significant.

All the way down, farther and farther they journeyed into the beautiful country with the air growing balmier with each mile. The people of all walks in life swarmed around each little wooden station hoping to catch a glimpse of the man whose name thrilled them as none other in the public affairs of their section. Constantly he was called to the rear of the train to greet them. With some such instinct as women know in the mothering of a gifted son whose bril-

liant career had become her soul thought in the life, Varina continued her efforts to protect him from the many demands and annoyances of the trip, feeling that constant exertion would consume his strength before the journey was finished.

Not every man in public or in private life in the South was an uncompromising secessionist. There were still a few, a certain historian might enjoy my saying, who had not "bent their knee to Baal."[1] At Chattanooga where they stopped there was such an urgent demand for a speech that they left the train and went to a hotel. Varina soon had cause for genuine alarm brought about by the menacing attitude of one of the Crutchfield brothers whose tirade upon her husband—the outcome partly of intoxicants, partly of ill will for one whom he regarded as a leader in the secession movement—became so violent, noisy and personal that it reached her in a distant room. In great excitement she left her children with the nurse and hurried outside to find to her peace of mind that the citizens had restored quiet and there was no further disturbance. Her intense excitement did not prevent her from enjoying the dry, good humor of a 'po white' as the South's indigent non-slave holding population was called. Perched upon a barrel, looking on in keen enjoyment of the scene much to her amusement he drawled contentedly to a bystander, "Tell that lady she needn't be oneasy, Jeff Davis will make his speech."

Throughout the South, hundreds of prominent citizens boarded the train at every station, until it looked as if an army was already gathering. As they passed over the beautiful Tennessee and Alabama hills, on down through the rolling prairies and yellow uplands, the sudden smell of violets drifted on the air, from the pleasant dooryards making them

[1] A figure of speech applied variously in the South.

know that they were, indeed, in the South. And there were nooks and corners of it of such haunting loveliness that Leda had that pleasure once more been hers, might have been tempted to deposit her famous eggs. Nature, however, was in quite a contrast with the spirit of the travelers, but she, too is not wholly averse to moods of rampancy and catastrophe; an undiscovered vein runs through all.

Tired and worn by the long trip they finally reached the capital of Mississippi, named for the dour old soldier, Andrew Jackson, whose name among them was but another for independence and liberty. However he may have felt about it in his day they felt sure that were he living in the present the North would have had to kick the beam.

The children, much to their parents' delight, enjoyed every mile of the way and Varina hiding all her depression and uneasiness described to her friends many incidents of her trip. She could stand a lot of hard travel and after a little freshening up did not look to her friends any worse for the strenuous journey. The people of the small, growing capital city received them with many demonstrations of friendship and admiration.[1] Committees of prominent men met them everywhere. The women went in large numbers to call upon Varina, arranged receptions, dinners and teas for her, and noted what a handsome woman she was, what beautiful children she had. In grave tones they told her of all their proud hopes of Southern independence—how they looked forward to seeing their "beautiful Southland"—they were fond of calling it by this sentimental name—"freed from the Yankees."

But with all the peaceful welcome they had not been long in

[1] Jackson was situated in the new portion of the State, the capital having been removed from Natchez.

the capital of the State before they heard from both men and women that excitement amounting to hysteria pervaded every mind. Landlords and landladies who came in touch with the people throughout the State talked excitedly of little else. The news of every lodger and transient boarder was instantly spread abroad to become common knowledge. The anxiety that they themselves were silently experiencing was depicted on all faces. A fierce, and sullen spirit of resistance was everywhere visible. The country seethed like a cauldron. The gentry drank and swore quite enough; the poor whites drank and swore to their heart's content. It was some of these last who wept aloud at Lee's surrender; and it was some of these who, sobbing their way home from Appamattox, cried out in bitterness of soul "I'll *be damned* if I will ever love another country like I did this one." But O "Poor Whites," better for you that the towers of Illium burned since out of its ashes sprang your own Governors and First Ladies. But now there was but one passion consuming you, that, *Independence.* Varina knowing the state of mind that existed in certain Northern circles agreed with her husband when he expressed the belief that there would be a long and bloody war between the two sections. In view of the anger that lay between them it was not difficult to foresee that American would meet American sword in hand to record such another epic as Homer sang.

CHAPTER XLIII

A PRESIDENT'S WIFE

THE reception that Jefferson Davis and Varina had received from the people of the Southern states was warm and full of confidence. The kind atmosphere they now breathed was like balm to the cruel wounds their hearts had received from intense and irate partisans during their last days in Washington.

Though the people in Mississippi were along with the entire South in a state of great agitation, they had not neglected an essential requirement of secession. Governor John J. Pettus had already organized and made provisions for a State defense and in choosing a head had turned to the one outstanding military figure in its current history. The man who had triumphantly led his forces against Santa Anna at Buena Vista and Monterey must again lead them against tyranical powers to victory. That her husband had been appointed Major General in the army in Mississippi was no surprise to Varina, and both were pleased with it.

While the State had organized its military defense in some fashion, it had made little provision looking to actual war. The statement, by Northern historians, that the South was preparing four months for the war before the North had begun preparations is not substantiated by actual conditions. The South was as unready in everything but spirit and indignation as the North and more unprepared in numberless things, such as arsenals, military stores, and

a regular army. Its utter lack of preparedness, in the matter of arsenals, arms, and ammunition, was apparent everywhere and this condition prevailed very generally throughout the entire section. It had for the time being an ample supply of raw material drawn from the soil and little else. A peaceful secession was what it had hoped for and asked for through numerous committees of its leading citizens, though many of these feared there would be war. Secession once they had determined on they would have, war they did not want. But now that secession was accomplished, the question was in every mind and on every tongue—would the seceding states be permitted to go in peace? This great hope filled no heart more than it did that of Jefferson Davis though the bitter spirit of the various Committee meetings he had witnessed in Washington told him it was an expectancy past hope.

After Varina and her husband left Jackson they went immediately to their home on the Mississippi. Her parents were living in New Orleans and they did not go to Natchez. The Brierfield had something of strangeness about it to the eyes of the man and woman returning to it in the early Spring of 1861. Its hold upon them had weakened during long absences, filled with swift, high-colored, and stimulating action, in which both had taken part, and until recent developments had enjoyed. But it was not entirely absence of years they admitted that wrought the change in their attitude towards it—both passionately loved nature and domesticity and could have in time revived their taste for these, but a veil shrowding some unknown thing they could not quite make out seemed to hang over the big, lonely house. A vague sense of some impending tragedy weighed them down and the very air at times seemed to oppress and stifle

them. Everywhere a sadness they could not divine unless derived from their own state of mind rested upon the fields and river. Although they were at home, a strange nostalgia and loneliness overcame them that they strove to hide from each other. For now they must no longer think of any home but "Brierfield."[1]

The negroes crowded up from their cabins to welcome them, asking eagerly for the little boy Samuel. Many of them did not know that the child was dead, but were soon reconciled on beholding to their astonishment and joy three other children. To Maggie, Jefferson, and the baby Joe they gave a noisy and glad welcome, praising God their master and mistress while hugging the little white bodies of the children close to their strong black breasts. The master and mistress filled with care and apprehension looked on with listless smiles. The domestic scene before them was beautiful, but the pathos pervading all things about them enveloped this too. Mental pictures crowded before their disturbed vision. At times it looked as if some huge fabric was dissolving before their eyes and rising from its ruin was a delicate frame work of many colored spires and domes, mirage or reality they hardly knew which. With tightened lips they put all doubts from them, even laughed when the children wanted to give all their playthings to the negroes. Laughter was natural to the woman and to some extent to the man. Both relished life and valued it for its own sake, had discovered in it *that something* superior to both circumstance and change. Their thought and imagination had been influenced by long and intimate association with the most brilliant minds of the Nation, and the best literature of every age which gave them an *esprit* and power

[1] Confidences with contemporaries.

that would enable them to wear long, where the half-developed soon frayed to the bone. Though the demand upon them was, and continued to be, tremendous, terrible, that they would hold out to the end was certain. In the present crisis Jefferson Davis turned to his more stolid and less sensitive brother Joseph, and Varina seeing the good effect of the latter's company kept him constantly over from "The Hurricane" at "Brierfield." The elder brother's bluff, determined spirit relieved the loneliness and depression that sometimes weighed upon the more thoughtful younger brother whose sensibilities were finer, more delicate and keen, and more easily affected.

"Yes, by God the South ought to secede, had every right to secede; it was a disgrace for it to remain in the Union any longer, damn it!" old Joseph bawled loud enough, people said, to hear him in Vicksburg. He knew the Constitution by heart and had all the present issues before the country, as it were, at his finger tips. His daily occupation now was the study of the political situation—"diabolical scheme" he called it—and haranguing the people in public meetings in the city of Vicksburg and other nearby towns, on the wrongs of the South. People flocked about him wherever he went and taken all together he was an inspiring, wholesome personality to the multitude.

As the days passed things at "Brierfield" began to look more natural. Jefferson Davis and Varina loved quietude, even solitude, the man more so than the woman, though she often said it was the best environment for peace of mind and spirit. Their children were delighted with the big, rambling house and the open country, and their happy laughter and noisy games did much to bring about normal conditions. The country was not a picturesque one in the usual sense of

the word but it presented a magnificent prospect that had much in it of sublimity. The great river rising in huge, sluggish billows, rolling heavily and monotously past the broad open fields to the sea, was a never ending source of pride and wonder to them. They had enchanting views of it through the gaps in the forest, and its broad bosom covered with many craft relieved the austerity of the dark lowland country.

As substantial as were the fears taking hold upon them the calm and peace around them had its effect as the days passed. After all the turmoil they had left behind,—the high-pitched voices, the fierce gestulations, the wild incoherent sentences, the quiet of country life was like balm to both. Here, in the deep country peace, with the silence broken only by the happy voices of the negroes shouting over to each other from field to field, the lowing of cattle, the soft bleating of sheep, the *gra gra* of the purple grackle swirling in heavy droves through the air, they wondered at the fierce spirit they had witnessed at times in the conventions of men. Looking out upon it Varina found herself slowly repeating—Byron's inspirational phrases being very much in vogue at that day, "where all but the spirit of man is divine." Such songsters as the red bird the winter keeps throughout in this portion of the South, and its brilliant wing flashing through the grey, winter forest filled them with delight. Constantly they were calling their children to come and hear some bird's lilt pouring down from the branches of a tree, or to see the blue and white crane and tall pelican on the river.

Several times they had come back to "Brierfield" with the hope of staying, of making it their permanent home, but now when they recalled the sea of angry faces left behind them in the Nations Capital they felt that, few would stay

under their roof in quietude and peace. There would be war they kept telling themselves however, all might wish to avert it. Strong men and women had wept at the thought of the desolation it would bring, but now a long-suffering and irate people had made their decision, and secessionist, anti-secessionist, slaveholder and non-slaveholder all were united in a common cause. As the Richmond Dispatch had in the past announced, "The South could go alone"—the proud and boastful South, that had always felt itself superior to any other section of the country. It seemed always to have been a pampered section; had been regarded with more favor by the Mother Country, who acknowledged a closer social bond. It had not left the Motherland to be rid of despised despotism and oppression, had not gone from her as undersirables, but had come flauntingly to spread her colonies farther under the influence of such spirits as Raleigh. In the present crisis the heart of all England went out to the new States seeking to form themselves into a Confederacy, and as months passed her great Premiers and Lords of many rank—Gladstone, Palmerston, Donoughmore watched eagerly with a hope of seeing it win its independence. Though she gave it no official recognition her best sympathies remained with it; and only when controlled by dire self-protection, and then only in certain industrial and commercial centers, did she become silent as to its fate.

The people no longer hid their fierce desire for freedom from Northern dominance. It was now plain that they were determined on independence. If not by moral suasion and peaceful measures, then by force of arms. *"Virtute et armis"* could well have been inscribed upon their banners. Their action had been characterized by Northern poet and editor as the "spirit of anarchy," but as well call Wallace, Bruce or the

Black Douglas anarchist as the proud, impatient spirits that were now in revolt.

Though striving to keep calm Varina was during these months in a highly nervous and excited condition. With a warm and fervid imagination she could see she told her friends, vast armies marching out in defense of the South and always Jefferson Davis was commanding them—*always*. The great feats and sacrifices in behalf of liberty that history had recorded, and of which her beloved "Great Heart" had talked so much to her about, kept continually recurring to her mind. She remembered too, with a swift pain his horror of disloyalty, his devotion to his country's flag, and with a fierce leap of the blood his adoration of Liberty. And after all what was this black strife to be about but devotion to the flag on the part of the people of the North and adoration of liberty on that of the people of the South. These things he had told her always draw the sword from the scabbard, create new flags and set up new empires.

But Varina's mood was not always heroic and at brief intervals she was only the mother watching her little ones running in and out of the house, through the grass grown gardens, under the decaying rose pergolas and scuppernong arbors, and at such times the old longing for the peace and comfort of domestic privacy came back to her. At such times not even her happiest triumphs at the height of her social life in the Nation's pleasant Capital appealed to her as much. "Oh" she told friends about her "if I could only make a home here for my husband and little ones."[1] What a prospect! How eagerly she would toil to bring back leafage and bloom to the withering branches of the lilac and new growth to the scrub orchard. Here she and her beloved and

[1] Conversations with contemporaries.

their offspring would hide away from the storms of life, forgetting its vain and empty honors—forgetting all the bitter strife that flared in the eyes of men and women. But they were marked for the mountain ranges and would never know the smooth road of the valley lands until their pathway lay far upon the western slopes of life. With a proud gesture that matched his own she cried out at times, to win his admiration not unmixed with tender sympathy and pity, that she herself felt that she could lead an army against the enemies of the South . That her husband was to be in the military service pleased her. She had grown tired of the bitter debates and wrangling in Congress over governmental matters. Let come what may, he would be in the military branch of the new government to which service he had always been partial. She had noticed that a boyish eagerness invariably flared up in his face and gestures whenever he saw artillery or discussed army affairs. She remembered his soldierly bearing and eager glance on the morning he rode Tartar away to join his command for Mexico. Yes, in the army had the Fates willed it. But did the self-willed Athena in disobedience of parental advice, once more determine to take sides in the affairs of men? Did she then wander along the great river marking out the Vicksburg hills where "The Wrath" was to scatter its thousands and tens of thousands? How could they know? Their God they said did all things well, little dreaming that the high God had nothing to do with Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis' call for troops.

"Brierfield" was not kept in as good condition as it had formerly been. There was no James Pemberton to trim its hedges and repair its fences. The Cherokee rose with which the roadways were bordered, as was the custom in that day in the Natchez District, has been allowed to trail for many

lengths out of place. The whole place looked unkept, and visibly there was much to do to put it in a state of repair. Now that Varina would be left alone to supervise it in her husband's absence, the weeks that he spent there were filled with preparations for its upkeep. After provision for the care of his family his first thought now was and had always been for the comfort of the negroes, especially the ones old and infirm. But spend the day as they may during the long hours of the night there were tossings and many prayers that all things might be adjusted between the two sections that would lead to a peaceful separation. There is some proof that even at this late day he would have considered reunion on a basis of justice to the South. Anything was better than war, even the expensive proposition made in the General Assembly of New York.[1] But Jefferson Davis felt there would be war and out of his anxiety came the famous utterance showing his dependence upon divine power —"Let us pray for that peace on earth and good will among men that is needful for happiness and prosperity."

But the man was not one to be easily broken on the wheel; he would be ready for any contingency. Preparations went on daily at "Brierfield" for another long absence. The more able-bodied negroes were made guardians for the young children and the helpless old people. Varina and her children were also confided to their care and he felt confident that these would be defended by their black protectors. This trust had been placed in them for generations until now it had grown to be a fixed trait of their natures. Other traits as beautiful might have continued to flourish in more abundance had their emancipation come as a peaceful one.

[1] Emancipation for the negro. Compensation to slave holders by the National Government and peace.

In all her husband's preparations for his absence Varina was at his side in sympathetic conference or seeking his advice—the last a habit which had grown upon her with the years to continue through life. She would keep the home for his return, would reclaim the lawns and gardens of "Brierfield," would care for the negroes and direct them in "making a living" for themselves and children. With a gifted author, I too will say that it is in such moods, frequent enough in her life, that I like her best. But it took a hardier fibre than this to stem such currents as awaited her, and our liking necessarily deepens into an admiration not unmixed with awe.

The present situation was a strange and unlooked for circumstance in her life, but her high purpose and courage at this juncture was proof that she had lived it well. Her thought now was that in future, for some time at least, she would be alone. It was a hard fate that had overtaken her, but, rather than admit it she turned to her lighter vein, saying with a smile, that the old boatmen always said that no one who had ever tasted the water of the great river but what would wander back again, and there she was willing to do her share in the country's peril. Still, the bright firesides of the *elite* of the National Capital, where wit and *bon mot* had sparkled brighter even than the flames upon the hearths —prized circles in which she and her husband were sought and admired by both Democrats and Republicans, were in quite a contrast with the lonely plantation home with its brown winter gardens and lawns, the palings around which, were rotting and in disarray. The prospect of getting it once more habitable seemed at times a heavier task than she had ever confronted. Like the women of her section she had been shielded from all labor and knew little or nothing about

the hardships of life. It was a rather general condition that existed among the women of the slaveholding class throughout the South at this period. But, while it may have been true that they, as some of their critics have claimed, "cried on the least provocation, laced themselves to death and frittered through life," these same soft fibred butterflies developed quite another spirit at the outbreak of the War, showing that there must have been firm and solid under pinnings somewhere in their fragile make-up.

Varina smiled a little humorously, for it was like her to catch any glint of humor in the circumstances of her life, as she packed away her reception dresses, plumes and jewels, "for happier days than the present" she told herself. As the reader has already discovered she was never extravagant in the matter of dress, was even thrifty in money matters, but she always dressed well and in good taste, sometimes handsomely. With all of her *esprit* and strong mentality she was still feminine, that is, "womanly," as the phrase means among women. In the matter of dress she once said gayly to a friend in Natchez, "One should always look their best, especially if they have a distinguished husband. It would never do to look dowdy and unkept by his side." We find some such thought as this in the early pages of her *Memoir.*

During these weeks at Brierfield she followed her husband everywhere about the place, bravely endeavoring to take up the life that lay before her. Sometimes her thoughts were not wholly dark. He would be back and forth, she consoled herself.

The flowers of which she was passionately fond seized and held her fancy. She would retrim the roses, divide the stocky rows of hyacinths, spider lilies and daffodils that had

multiplied out of all symmetry during their absence.[1] The war surely, she mused, would never come as far as "Brierfield." She knew very little about it except in conjecture and where it would be staged was still vague in her mind, but surely it would not be near "Brierfield." Here she and her children would wait and watch for him. She would do her best to have all in readiness when he did return—a victor, certainly, for she always connected victory with his efforts; too many times had she seen him win to think of failure in connection with him. Her mind went swiftly back to his numberless victories. She heard again the shouts that had greeted him all along the great river on his return from Mexico. Had not his whole life been crowned with one continual victory? She could not associate that stately, resolute figure with anything but victory. What strange and sinister foes, let them be the emissaries of the Evil One, could harm a hair of his head. Such were her thoughts in any connection with him.

They were now often in their gardens early in the morning trimming, and pruning the trees and shrubs, many of which had been "imported from other countries" but which were now dying of neglect.[2] On this special morning they were pruning a prized rose bush—a magnificent tea, bearing the name of "The Glory of France" several of which grew in the grounds, one, she says, by the side of the gate. The parent bush had been brought from the garden at "the Briers," near Natchez, after they had returned from their honeymoon.[3] This special variety had survived neglect and her husband

[1] The daffodil was more often called jonquil in the South at that time.

[2] Memoir, Vol. I. Old records in the Mississippi Department of Archives and History.

[3] She often gave her babies the name of this rose.

had decided to graft some of the healthiest slips upon other stocks. They were, she wrote, examining a handful of vigorous branches, cutting away the shoots to a tender bud to be used for the graft when a messenger on horseback arrived with a telegram. And there together, in the garden, pale and agitated, they read the message that at Montgomery, Alabama, the Capital of the New Confederacy, he had been elected President of the Confederate States of America. The news affected them as would a blow or shock.[1] Was it possible that he, and not the brilliant Rhett of South Carolina, nor the magnificent Toombs of Georgia, had been chosen for that high office? Would South Carolina even in orderly convention consent for any other but her own sons to lead her in establishing her independence, in setting up a government under which she was willing to live? The very thought seemed preposterous, and yet she was to hear them say many times that he had been the one outstanding choice of the convention. Varina noticed that her husband was deeply affected and remained silent as he read the telegram over several times.

While she had preferred that he should be in the military branch of the new government, she was nevertheless deeply impressed with the high honor that had been conferred on him. Of all her distinguished sons that the South should have chosen him to fill the highest office in the gift of the new Republic filled her heart with mingled sensation of pride, awe and gratitude. Neither could hardly realize the position they were in, and for the moment the man shrank from the heavy responsibility laid upon him. Nor did the honor blind the eyes of the woman to the trust. Though she was aspiring in matters concerning him, she knew the heavy

[1] Confidences with contemporaries.

demand of public office. Her nerves twitched and sang as she strove to collect her thoughts. He had now reached the apex of worldly honor and she never doubted for a moment but that she was a part of his high achievement, and claimed some part in his success. But the strenuous public life that both had led, especially for the past winter, had wearied him greatly and she believed with him that a change would have been best for him. . . . .

And now once more the roses and lilacs of the Brierfield were to be left, without a hand to tend and prune them. What might have blossomed there besides the rose, in beauty and simplicity of purpose, had another destiny been hers! Her environment and association, however, for the past twenty years had been of a nature to draw her away from the simple life. Although she would never be without a strong love for it, its influence had in a large measure waned. The world that men had fashioned, not the natural one that inland dwellers knew, had impressed her, had drawn her into its plans and schemes once more. The woman who had in childhood caught her only glimpses of the world beyond from the Show Boats upon the river had now become one of the stars in the play.

Standing on the wide front gallery a few hours later, while her husband sat silent and in deep thought in his library, with one hand shading her broad, reflective brow, her gaze sought long and intently the great ocean like stream and sunlit fields around her. It was in such moods that she was deeply reverential. She was endeavoring, she confided to a friend, to realize all that had happened in the world of men, but instead, God and nature held her, and she found herself slowly repeating from the prayer book, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of hosts, Heaven and earth are full of Thy Glory; Glory be to Thee, O Lord Most High."

CHAPTER XLIV

LAST DAYS AT "BRIERFIELD"

VARINA had now become one of the central figures of a vast revolutionary movement, as vast as mankind had ever witnessed, and must act her part in the drama it daily unfolded. In the face of it she had put her house in fairly good condition and made her children comfortable for their short stay at "Brierfield," for hers was a logical, orderly mind that could never be satisfied amid disorder and confusion. It was arranged that she should join her husband in Montgomery.[1] With a quiet but steady purpose she packed his trunk with Maggie and little Jeff playing around her and the baby Joe plucking at her dress. Carefully, one by one, she examined each collar and cuff of the shirts, the socks, and handkerchiefs, and then when all was finished, and he had dressed, with a pained look coming into her moist eyes she watched him hug his two older children close to his bosom. When the nurse had led them away, she held the baby up to him to be kissed and with tears and tender embraces bade him God speed on his high mission. He wore no armor, but she saw a flaming sword in his eyes. As she stood with wet cheeks gazing intently after him as he rode away she was conscious of a queer feeling in her heart, half of pain, half of ecstasy. She was the wife of the President of the Confederate States of America—a nation newly born, but a nation for all that, with all the paraphernalia of government,

[1] *A Memoir,* Vol. I. Conversations with contemporaries. Letters to Mrs. Houston.

and a Constitution better even than that the great Washington, by his valor, had called into existence, the proud, self-confident South was heralding to the world.

They thought best, at the time, that she and their children should not accompany him to Montgomery, though he regretted afterwards that they were not present to witness the memorable spectacle of his inauguration. But "No," Varina had smilingly said "he must not be cumbered with wife and children in this hour of heavy responsibility." It was a frequent winsome sally of hers that women and children should never be in the way of men bent on State business. Hundreds of times she had looked into his grave face on occasions of his departure with a great prayer in her heart that God would keep him; but no such prayer ever came to her lips as she uttered now. And Varina believed in prayer; at great passes in her life found in it her soul's sincerest delight. She had come of a race and time noted for much prayer. And now, indeed, was a time for it. Not only at "Brierfield" but everywhere this proud and haughty people prayed in humble fashion that He would be their guide, their "shield and buckler." But though they prayed humbly enough to the God in whom they trusted with a child-like faith, pride, with its tumults and gloryings was still visible upon their countenances and in their every word and gesture. And thus with the royal air and manner characteristic of them their new Confederacy went forward.

Varina of all women must be up and doing. The handsome reception dresses were all unpacked, gone over carefully and pressed in order that every fall and cascade of lace might be in perfect condition and ready for the use to which she knew they must now be put. A seamstress was brought down from Vicksburg for the purpose of getting her

ready. Her parents came up from New Orleans to spend a few days with her before her departure. They talked of many things and it was decided that her sister Maggie should come to her in Montgomery. She was systematic in all her arrangements for the future. Maids chosen in the last few days from among the brighter young negroes were kept busy pressing and packing. That the thought of her departure from the Brierfield did not affect her as it had in other days occurred to her, bringing a little pang as she went on with preparations for her self and children. How she would bear herself in this new position filled her thoughts at times. It had all been easy in the National Capital. There were those who opposed them, it is true, but these still in a social sense liked her husband, liked her, and she had discovered that it is much easier for one to bear themselves well when one feels that those around entertain no personal ill will. She could win and hold the regard and liking even of men of the Seward type, but when others entered her life, setting themselves against her husband, and as a natural consequence, against herself—what of this? Would this be her problem in the future? Strange and hardly believable that there should be such a *contretemps* at so grave a juncture. But there were, though by reason of the very nature of the times of a less pronounced type, Marjorie Ferrars in the South at that day. There, also, were Sommes, or some very much like him.

At the Brierfield Varina continued her preparations feverishly. Too much was happening in the big world in which she was to move as a central light, for her to grieve long over the orchard trees barked by the mules and horses and dying, the lilac bushes battered and trampled by the cows, or gasp and thrill at the sight and song of the red bird flashing

through the heavy forest. Dearer things than these, which at "Brierfield" had always entered so intimately into home life, were now at stake. The liberties and hopes of a people, were to be defended against adversaries who did not understand them, nor even wished to do so it seemed—adversaries who would henceforth endeavor to crush and destroy them. Her spirit flamed over the wrongs of the South. Never had the beautiful country seemed as fair to her. Freedom, liberty, all that the Declaration of Independence had vouchsafed its people was what the South now was contending for—freedom, liberty, independence. She thought much of her husband's heavy responsibilities at present, but notwithstanding this, it thrilled her that his hand would be among those to free their beloved land, and give it a new government under which it could dwell in peace and honor. That he would give it the best that was in him she felt as sure as she did of her own existence. She had not been in political life with him for so many years not to understand the position of the South, nor could she feel that its people were in the wrong. With a smile she recalled that Judge Winchester, in the old days at Natchez, was fond of remarking at certain crises, though he himself was a Whig of Whigs and tutored in the doctrines of Hamilton, Washington, and Jay, that "No federalist ever disputed the natural right of revolution and certainly South Carolina had as good a pretext to apply these doctrines to the Tariff laws as Kentucky and Virginia had to apply them to the alien and sedition laws." Her smile grew satirical as she thought that "none of this had been about slavery."

The country had been very dear to her from the Jersey coast to its far Texas border, but now her embrace of it had shrunk to its Southern borders, and with a passionate devo-

tion that seemed more intense than any she had ever felt for it in the past. The region that gave her birth, the State, the Natchez country, Vicksburg, "Brierfield," the great Mississippi whose banks had been her playground in childhood—all rushed in upon her thought. At times she said it seemed that her heart would break with love of it. And there were many more like her in the South. It may be set down for a fact that the women both of the South and the North helped to bring on the war as much as they hated war and as little as they dreamed that it would come. Varina was like the woman about her. There own lives many of them declared they would "freely give" to see the South freed from what they believed to be Northern tyranny and oppression.[1] In this gallant mood—and no woman of the new born revolution was more earnest—she made her preparations to join him, to stand by his side, no longer the happy, care free wife of a United States Senator but the wife of the President of the Southern Confederacy. How strange and unreal it all appeared. These thoughts and many of a similar nature continued to crowd in and out of her fevered and excited brain as the February days passed and it would not be true of her to write in any other way. Gifted with a happy art for extracting the best from life she had given much to husband, children, kindred, friends and home; and had received much in return. Life had been for her in many respects Arcadian. She was now by a fateful combination of circumstances to be numbered with the women of history of whom her tutor was so fond of telling her as a child. One partial to such study might ask, "Did vague, subconscious thoughts then flit through his deep mind that she herself might become one of these?" How she wished for him today! At times the

[1]Conversations with numerous women of the Confederacy.

past rushed back upon her with a heavy surge and she was once more sitting with him listening to his wise teachings.

Through the following days like all southern women she was eager and determined, for she too with Jefferson Davis and his gathering legions had caught the light to which Hampden could not close his eyes. But capable, strong, adaptable, and intellectual as she was, she would still need fortitude that rarest of all virtues. We know how sorely she was to be tried. Would she endure?

She was an educated woman of broad and rich experiences, not without worldly ambition, a happy woman of sound humor and not afraid to be herself. Had she written down her thoughts from day to day one wonders just what they would have further revealed. Life had now crowded forward upon her, strong and brimming, like the great river that had been her playmate in childhood—her own life thrilling her with the awe and fascination that she felt for the heavy flood. When it had become a naked, stark and hideous thing, scarcely to be endured—when sneered at as a "coarse western woman" and set down as a parvenu known in that day as an upstart—when quivering beneath the brutal lash of Pollard's spleen and such deadly female shafts as needs must at a later day come anonymously—"not a Southern woman"—a "hybrid opportunist"—would she, who Mrs. James Chestnut describes as "ever brave and smiling" in the darkest hours of adversity—would she, admired by the Websters, the Calhouns, the Pierces, even the crabbed Seward, and loved by the Cobbs, the Chestnuts, the Emorys and others too numerous to mention—would she endure through all? Would she stand yet another test—keep her good sense, her lovableness, her great kindness of heart through all that she must suffer as the chief representative and regent of

Southern womanhood? With what equanimity would she bear the scorn, and threat of Northern soldiery heaped upon her for no other reason than that she was the wife of Jefferson Davis? Would she meet with composure, the contumely that was meant for all Southern womanhood? When she with her helpless babes was overtaken in a desperate flight for safety, placed in a disused, abandoned vehicle and hooted through the street, was it because of any act of her own? Rather was it not from the outstanding fact that she was in a sense the representative of all that ununiformed army of faithful, loyal spirits that composed the womanhood of the Southern Confederacy? We know that she was a spirited, proud-hearted and what Opie Read would call a "high-headed Southern woman" and, as one who saw beneath the pale, proud face has observed, "with a sensitive nature underlying all." Would she stand a yet supremer test? Would she remain sound and sweet to the core when all cruelty and ignominy had been heaped upon one who was dearer to her than her own life, and she must gaze upon him in the collapse of all his proud hopes and aimes. To all such the answer is her *Memoir*, where peace, good-will and forgiveness have been no more beautifully portrayed since the days of the "army of martyrs." Surely she had her God with her, or else she would have taken the revenge that He says is His own. With provocation such as was hers on the cool white pages before her she could easily have "written them up;" and some doughty old greybeard there still may be who will angrily exclaim that he "wished to God she had." But as heroic as she proved herself to be in all the dark passes of life her triumph over self and her refusal to punish her enemies is, after all is said, her high peak of heroism and fame.

A little story told to her long years afterwards always brought from her lips a silvery peal of laughter, the story running that a small school girl while listening intently to her teacher describing a hero exclaimed excitedly "Yes, and I have seen a she-ro—I've seen Mrs. Jefferson Davis!"

That she was now developing Elizabethan strength of character which alone could have sustained her in the life she was to live is not attested by any undue self-assertiveness on her part at this period, but such strength she was developing, much to the relief of her biographer who takes this journey with her. Her early training, education and association had developed a more powerful intellect than is usually found in the female. She had never wasted her powers and gifts. She had drunk liberally of life's cup, which for her was always an overflowing one, but with caution and with no injury of natural powers. She says little of herself when writing of those high-colored, shifting scenes, but what she does say is truly satisfying, and she had her witnesses, numberless incidents and confidences treasured by contemporaries and their descendants to be in the circumstance of things recorded here. But admitting all her high qualities of mind and temperament, and her early preparation for an unusual career it is a safe conclusion that she would never have comprehended, nor met the present situation as she did had she not have been drilled and tutored in the school of high public service, with whose every detail she was intimately acquainted. No other woman in the South was as well fitted for the heavy responsibilities she now must assume. She had disclaimed on one occasion, with a charming *naivete* that she sometimes displayed in conversation with learned men, interest in deep discussions of a scientific military nature, but henceforth, she says, she eagerly welcomed

any information relative to all such matters, and her *Memoir* shows how well she profited by her study of the subject. Her detractors set on by Pollard were critical of her as the first lady of their Confederacy and that too in the face of the fact that she had been at home with Presidents, foreign diplomats, professors of science and literature, many of whom had been charmed with her culture and grace. Some unknowing ones even went so far as to infer that she was not of the blue blood variety, had come from a region settled by the skimmed milk of other communities, people who in the opinion of Mammy Jane who never forgot her Virginia breeding had to be continually reminded that "Whad eber you do doan you neber dot your cawn biskits."[1] But since it has crept into the writings of her detractors that people resented Varina's airs, these must be told that like a thousand other misconceptions of the story of the Southern Revolution and its people, this must go the way of the allegation that Robert E. Lee beat his slaves unmercifully. Virginia, above all things, is loyal to her own and she could never forget that under the very sound of the guns of Bull Run—her first lady's grandfather and innumerable other kindred were taking their long sleep;[2] that on her official rolls the name of Kempe was among her early governors and secretaries of the Province, that maternally Varina was her own. There might have been some disaffected ones who thought that they could have better filled Varina's place, and there might have been a few who sought to break her joyous spirit, but it took much to do this. She triumphed still

[1] The slave women of Virginia brought this injunction, always solemnly impressed, to the new States. Nobody seems to have known its exact meaning but all in a manner at that day at least understood its significance.

[2] Dr. George Graham. See "A Casket of Reminiscences" by H. S. Foote.

over all such by her ready smiles, her gay banter, her fortitude and lovableness, and more than these by her power of forgiveness.

But Varina packing her reception dresses away for social triumphs in Montgomery gave no thought to the far future. Enough was going on at present for any one brain to cope with. She was now gaining a reputation for being very learned herself and to the neighbors around "Brierfield," who were principally of the poorer class of whites, she explained in clear convincing terms the whole matter of secession. These, she laughingly told her father, wanted to know all the "whyfores," and "wherefores," knowing that "Miz Jeff Davis could explain them if anybody could!" Her woman's tongue was ready enough to explain the country's situation to the overseer and his family and all of their class. And not only Varina but thousands of Southern women were now seeking closer contact with the South's "Po white trash." And these blushed and trembled with joy at thought of the new tie and bond.

Amid her preparations to join him in Montgomery letters came frequently from her husband telling her of the events taking place everywhere in the South. The country was aroused, alert, determined. The poor whites and the Cotton Kings in every town and cross roads village were drilling together, eating out of the same pan and swearing that they would be free just as the Continentals had done. While he wrote her that his own trip to Montgomery had been one of a continual ovation there was, nevertheless, a note of sadness in the messages sent her from day to day. He wished that she and their children could have witnessed his inauguration. It would have been to them a pleasant memory in after years. These were hardly old enough to have retained it, but like

all parents they believed their children to be superior to the average.

In all the stirring and strenuous action about him he was still her lover. She carried his letters in her bosom for days as she had done when he was in Mexico and read them many times, for she too would always be a lover. With pride and excitement flushing her face she read his inaugural address to her father and Joseph E. Davis who was spending these last days with her at the Brierfield. Together they sat in the pleasant library and listened spell bound as she read. At a number of paragraphs the two men stood up, cheered and clapped their hands frantically. As she continued to read slowly each passage with her heart beating so fiercely she could feel it throbbing against her breast, her eyes were at times blinded with tears. When it was finished the old men stood up again and cheered so wildly that it brought from the fields a number of the negroes and white laborers panting with fear that the house was on fire.[1]

In like manner the haughty aristocrats of the South went forward to their destiny, and of one thing there was a certainty as old Joseph Davis counting his slaves by the hundreds daily reiterated, pompously proud of his literary attainments, "They would never wind their horn except with their dying breath." Strong, unique fragment of civilization that having so much about it suggestive of Homerean gods, might have become Hellenistic could it have remained undisturbed!

For Varina, life now seemed like some unknown headland upon which bloomed and clustered many a strangely scented and bright colored flower. Fear of its dizzy heights at times possessed her, but with all there was ecstasy.

[1] Conversations.

Tears ran down her cheeks as she endeavored to read her husband's inaugural address over in her own room. There were phrases that sounded so much like him, that reading it in a Parisian Journal she would have known who wrote it. And, indeed they soon would be reading it in many Journals and in many tongues throughout the world. Kneeling at night beside her children in their long white night robes and feeling somehow as she did at the birth of little Jeff when she had been ill unto death, she kissed their sleeping faces many times. That night she says her dreams were happy ones; they were back in Washington in the fine old house with its twenty-two rooms and handsome pot plants, Seward was telling her how much he thought of her dear invalid, the New England air was invigorating and the good Mrs. Harrison Grey Otis of Boston was kissing her baby's fevered brow and all was well.

The next few days were spent in arranging the final details for what might be another long absence from "Brierfield"—how long none knew nor could conjecture. It was with many painful reflections and regrets that they found themselves unable to take their books with them. They had talked about it before his departure for Montgomery and had decided that it would not be wise to load themselves down with too much baggage. It was a rare collection and would have adorned any home or library in the South, and the thought grieved them when they remembered how few books there were in the South.

With Varina's departure for Montgomery the Brierfield house was closed once more, a portion of the books, and furnishings having been stored farther inland which was thought best if the country went to war.

END OF VOLUME I

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The following list contains many of the outstanding books, papers and records that the author has used in the preparation of this volume:

Jefferson Davis—A Memoir—Vols. I and II, by Mrs. V. Jefferson Davis.

Jefferson Davis Constitutionalist—His Letters, Papers and Speeches—10 Vols., by Dunbar Rowland.

Reviews of Jefferson Davis—His Letters, Papers and Speeches—1 Vol. Compiled and edited by Dunbar Rowland.

Confederate Veteran Magazine, March 1909—Vol. XVII, No. 2.

Confederate Military History—Vol. VII.

The Northwestern Career of Jefferson Davis, by Milo M. Quaife.

"The Daughter of the Confederacy"—Her Life, Character and Writings, by Chiles Clifton Farrell, Ph. D.

Journal of American History, Second number, second quarter, third volume MCMIX.

Wives, by Gamaliel Bradford.

Half-hours in Southern History, by Lesslie Hall.

The Prison Life of Jefferson Davis, by John J. Craven.

A Southern Girl in '61, by Mrs. D. Giraud Wright.

Jefferson Davis President of the South, by Eckenrode.

Recollections of a Rebel Reefer, by James Morris Morgan.
Jefferson Davis—His Life and Personality, by Morris Schaff.
An Estimate of Jefferson Davis, by Dunbar Rowland.
Political History of Secession, by Daniel Wait Howe.
The South in the Building of the Nation—Vol. II.
The War Between the Union and the Confederacy, by William C. Oates.
Memoirs, by John H. Reagan.
Harpers Encyclopedia of United States History, Vol. III.
A History of the American People—Vol. IV, by Woodrow Wilson.
A Diary from Dixie, by Mary Boykin Chestnut.
Reminiscences of Peace and War, by Mrs. Roger A. Pryor.
Mississippi the Heart of the South—2 Vols., by Dunbar Rowland.
Reminiscences of the Civil War, by General John B. Gordon.
An Estimate of Jefferson Davis, by John Sharp Williams.
Recollections and Letters of General Lee, by R. E. Lee.
Civil History of the Confederate States, by J. L. M. Curry.
Jefferson Davis, by William E. Dodd.
History of the United States, by James Ford Rhodes.
Recollections Grave and Gay, by Mrs. Burton Harrison.
The Memorial Volume of Jefferson Davis, by J. W. Jones.
A Belle of the Fifties—Memoirs of Mrs. Clay of Alabama.
The Brother's War, by John C. Reed.
An Estimate of Jefferson Davis, by Charles B. Galloway.
Seventy-five Years in Old Virginia, by John Herbert Claiborne, A. M., M.D.

The History of the Confederate War—Vols. I and II, by George Cary Eggleston.

Library of Southern Literature—Vol. III.

Annual Report American Historical Association, 1911—Vol. II.

Historic Beauvoir, by Mrs. Wilbur Moore Jones.

Jefferson Davis, the Negroes and the Negro Problem, by Walter L. Fleming (Louisiana State University Bulletin).

Mississippi Newspaper Files, 1830-1860, in possession of the Mississippi Historical Society.

Pollard's Secret History of the Confederacy, and other volumes dealing with that subject.

The Diary of Gideon Wells—Vol. I.

Jefferson Davis, by Mrs. Robert Houston, Manuscript, Mississippi Historical Society.

"The Hurricane," short manuscript, by Mrs. M. P. H. Roach, Mississippi Historical Society.

Court Records Connected with the Title of "Brierfield"—Mississippi Historical Society.

Letters from Miss E. Coulson, niece of Mrs. Harriet B. Kells.

Verbal Reminiscences of Mrs. Harriet B. Kells, Col. Charles E. Hooker, and others mentioned in notes.

INDEX

A

Abert, Colonel, 310.
  Mrs. Charles, mentioned by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 180.
Abolitionists, 231, 244, 370.
  and Republicans, strength of their combination, 390-391.
  movement of, 333, 336.
    and the election of Lincoln, 337.
    Varina Howell's social life strained as a result of, 337-340.
  views on slavery, 260.
Adams, John Quincy, connection with charges against Webster of improper use of funds, excerpt from *A Memoir,* 165.
    and anti-slavery, 333.
    death described, by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 196.
    favorable comment on Jefferson Davis, 177.
    referred to, by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 185.
Adams, Mr. and Mrs. Stephen, 157.
Agassiz, Professor, 310.
Agua, Nueva, War with Mexico, 216, 217.
Alabama, 15, 193, 194, 442.
  secedes from the Union, 403, 405.
  withdrawal from National Democratic Convention in 1860, 381.
Albert and Victoria, comparison of life with that of Jefferson Davis and Varina Howell, 238.
Alexandria, Virginia, attendance at school here by Beckett Howell, 240.
  Beckett Howell in school at, 328.
  visit to, by Varina Howell and Professor Joseph Henry, 309-310.
American Revolution, service of Dr. Lewis Howell, 6.
    of Franklin Howell, 9.
    of Richard Howell, 5-6.
Ancestry, Howell, 1-11.
  Kempe, 12-17.
Anderson, Major Robert, 316.
Andrews, Major T. P., escort of Varina Howell to Washington where her husband had settled as War Minister, 281.
Appleton, the Hon. William, mentioned by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 358.
Arkansas, withdrawal from National Democratic Convention in 1860, 381.
Army, annoyances of the rules during Jefferson Davis' administration of the War Department, excerpt, *A Memoir,* 316.
  four years rule, irritation to Jefferson Davis, excerpt from *A Memoir,* 316.
Ashleigh, Mrs., Varina Howell's first glimpses of Washington, 148.

Ashman, connection with charges against Webster of improper use of funds, excerpt from *A Memoir,* 166.
Atchinson, David, mentioned by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 194.

B

Bache, Dallas, commented on by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 180-182.
host to the Davis family on their New England trip, as recorded in Varina Howell's *Memoir,* 355, 357.
mentioned in Varina Howell's *Memoir,* 346, 359.
George, brilliant naval exploits, described by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 180.
Richard, mentioned by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 180.
Mrs. (nee Dallas), praised by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 179-182.
Bacon, comparison of Webster with, in connection of charges of improper use of funds, excerpt from *A Memoir,* by Varina Howell, 165.
Baltimore, adjournment of National Democratic Convention of 1860, to, 383.
Convention, 385-386.
Bancroft, Mr., described by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 183.
Mrs., described by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 183.
Bangor, visited by the Davis family on New England trip, mentioned by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 355, 357.
"Banny," a name of Varina Howell for her husband, 280, 401.
Barfields, The, 99, 207.
Battle of Bull Run, 452.
Bedisco, Russian minister, Varina Howell's first glimpses of Washington, 149.
Bell, John, mentioned by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 192, 194.
Belle of the Fifties, by Mrs. C. C. Clay, recollections concerning Varina Howell, 291.
Belmont, efforts for conciliation between the South and North, 404.
Bennett, Mrs. James Gordon, Varina Howell's first glimpses of Washington, 148.
Benton, Mr., his eloquence and brilliance as a speaker in the Senate described by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 186-189.
Mrs., referred to by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 193.
Biloxi Gulf Coast, 377.
Black Hawk War, distinguished service of Jefferson Davis in, 90.
Blair, Mrs. Montgomery, and family, referred to by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 353.
Varina Howell's first glimpses of, 148, 150.
Bliss, Colonel, known at West Point as "Perfect Bliss," 282.
Blue Cockade, 368.
Bonin Islands, 304.
Bonin, Japanese dog, Jefferson Davis' pet, 304-305.
Boston, passed through by Varina

Howell and family on New England trip, as recorded in her *Memoir,* 352.
Bradbury, Hon. Mr., mentioned by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 194, 353.
Bradford, Lucy, Jefferson Davis' niece, 138, 155, 204.
Mary, 51, 75.
Brandywine, Battle of, Richard Howell's distinguished service in, 6.
Brazos, St. Iago, near Point Isabel, encampment of Jefferson Davis, 208, 214.
Breckenridge, John C., 389.
nomination of, at Richmond, 385.
Bremer, Frederika, literary work, 257.
visit to the United States, from her home, Sweden, excerpt concerning, from Varina Howell's *Memoir,* 256.
"Brierfield," 52, 53, 101, 111, 114-116, 120, 125, 135, 144, 170, 199, 203, 213, 227, 240, 342, 351, 361, 367, 368, 371, 419, 433, 434, 438, 439, 440, 441, 443.
description of life at, in Varina Howell's *Memoir,* 270.
grounds improved by Varina Howell and Jefferson Davis at time of completion of new house, 268-269.
last days at, 444-455.
new house at, completed, 268.
new shrubs for, imported from abroad according to old records in the Mississippi Historical Society, 269.
no longer so attractive to Varina Howell, 366.
plantation life after gubernatorial defeat, 265-266.
return to, by Varina Howell, and Jefferson Davis, after Thirty-first Congress, 264-265.
return to, by Varina Howell, and Jefferson Davis after victory of the Whigs, 267-279.
after War with Mexico, 229-233.
strangeness of, to Jefferson Davis and Varina Howell, 431-433.
trees and shrubs of, evidence of neglect of, as recorded in Varina Howell's *Memoir,* and in old records in the Mississippi Dept. of Archives and History, 441.
Varina Howell's early married life, 114, 126.
Varina Howell's lessening of longing for, 327.
Varina Howell's love for, 114-125, 219, 248.
Varina Howell's preparation for departure of her husband, Jefferson Davis, to War with Mexico, 202.
Varina Howell's supervision during her husband's engagement in the War with Mexico, 208-212.
"Briers, The," home of William Burr Howell and Margaret Louise Howell, 21, 23, 24, 25, 82, 87, 90, 92, 97, 98, 209, 441.
Brinkerhoff, Jacob, connection with charges against Webster of improper use of funds, excerpt from *A Memoir,* by Varina Howell, 167.
Brodhead, Mr. and Mrs., joint occupants of the Davis house on Thirteenth Street, Washington, 282.

Brooks, quarrel with Charles Sumner, 314.
Brown, Governor of Mississippi, appointment of Jefferson Davis to vacancy in United States Senate by, 236.
John, capture, conviction, hanging, 377.
Massacre, 381.
raid, 376-377.
Browning, Mrs. Elizabeth Barrett, comparison with Mrs. Pierce, from *A Memoir,* by Varina Howell, 303.
Brownsville, Varina Howell accompanies her husband to Washington, 142.
Bruce, Sarah, see Mrs. Seddon, 174.
Buchanan, James, 318.
account of John Brown Raid in message to Congress, 377.
cooling of friendship with Jefferson Davis and Varina Howell, 399.
helped to court of St. James, by Jefferson Davis, Secretary of War, 295.
his change from his former position on secession, 398.
inauguration, excerpt concerning, from *A Memoir,* by Varina Howell, 329-330.
old issues revived with his election, 326-327.
referred to by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 344, 345.
Varina Howell's first glimpses of Washington, 150.
Buena Vista, 252, 368.
Battle of, 222.
account given by Thomas L. Crittenden in letter to Joseph Davis, 216-217.
Jefferson Davis' distinguished service, 217.
Jefferson Davis' military exploits at, 430.
Jefferson Davis wounded, 217.
Burr, Aaron, 310, 311.
visit to James Kempe, 16.
Theodosia, ancestor of Varina Howell, 4, 336.
Keziah, grandmother of Varina Howell, wife of Gov. Richard Howell, 5, 8.
Burrs, ancestors of Varina Howell, characteristics, 4.
Burt, Mr., referred to by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 248.
Mrs., niece of Mr. Calhoun, referred to by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 248.
Butler, Benjamin F., referred to by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 359.
Col., mentioned by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 194.
Byrd, Mr., first husband of Mrs. James Kempe, 14.
Byrds, 230.

C

Cabin, John, Bridge, building of, under care of Jefferson Davis, Secretary of War, 295.
Cabinet, Jefferson Davis' resignation from, Pierce's regret, excerpt from *A Memoir,* 327.
Calhoun, A. P., 376.
Calhoun, John C., 88, 91, 92, 137.
characterization by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 189-192.
his death, political effect on Jefferson Davis, 261.
his defense of the Constitution, 244.
his similarity to Jefferson Da-

vis in personality noted by Varina Howell, 196.
his impressions of Varina Howell, 129-130.
Jefferson Davis as his pupil and follower, 261, 263, 293.
Jefferson Davis' comments on, quoted in Varina Howell's *Memoir,* 189.
Jefferson Davis in accord with, on all party questions, especially States' Rights as provided for in the Constitution, according to Varina Howell's *Memoir, Jefferson Davis, Letters, Papers and Speeches, Jefferson Davis Series,* 243.
Jefferson Davis' recognition of, as leader, 293.
Jefferson Davis' study of his mind, 335.
mentioned in Varina Howell's *Memoir,* 248, 249.
opposition to, by old Whig element, 263.
speech at Vicksburg in 1845, 126-136.
Varina Howell's first glimpses of, 148.
visit with Jefferson Davis and Varina Howell, 126-136.
California, withdrawal from National Democratic Convention in 1860, 381.
Camargo, 214.
Cameron, Simon, mentioned by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 194.
Campbell, Anthony, comments on James Kempe, 13.
his memoirs bearing on history of the Kempes, 13.
Colonel Archibald, 320.
Mr., mentioned by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 283.
Mrs., sister of Mrs. Bache, praised by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 179, 180.
Sir George, mentioned by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 180.
Canal Street, New Orleans, reception to First Mississippi, Jefferson Davis, Colonel, 223.
Cape Elizabeth, basket parties at, described by Varina Howell in account of New England trip in her *Memoir,* 353.
Capitol, National, remodeling of, in care of Jefferson Davis, Secretary of War, 294.
Carolinas, 13, 17, 89.
Carroll, Mrs., mentioned by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 353.
Casco Bay, excursions on, taken by Varina Howell and family on New England trip, as recorded in her *Memoir,* 352.
Cass, Mr., 330.
characterization by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 191.
Catholics, Legate to America, sent by Pius IX, 320.
Chalmette Plains and General Jackson, 224.
Charleston, 86, 138.
The Charleston Mercury, 376, 380, 394.
Covenant on secession, 325.
National Democratic Convention in 1860, 375-386.
Varina Howell's social prestige in, 290.
Chatham, speech in British Parliament, 371.
Chestnut, James, leader of the South, 422.

Mary Boykin, author of *A Diary from Dixie,* 292.
comment on Varina Howell, 318, 319.
of Charleston, close friend of Varina Howell, 291.
of South Carolina, comment on Varina Howell, 373.
portrait of Varina Howell in *A Diary from Dixie,* 4.
China, 306.
Chotard, Major, 311.
Claiborne, Governor W. C. C., 198.
Clapp, Mr. Charles, mentioned by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 353.
Clay, Clement C., leader of the South, 422.
Clay, Henry, 95, 97, 98, 319.
debate with Jefferson Davis, 261.
his oratorical abilities in the Senate characterized by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 186-189.
Mrs. C. C., recollections concerning Varina Howell, in *A Belle of the Fifties,* 291.
Coast Survey, 346.
described by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 180-182.
Columbia College, 313.
Committee, of Military Affairs and Pensions, Jefferson Davis appointed on, 242.
of Thirteen, and the Crittenden Compromise, 394, 396-397, 399.
Compromise, reception of, failure laid to Seward, 396.
Comte, Professor John Le, excerpt concerning from *A Memoir,* 310.
Concord, return of Mr. and Mrs. Pierce to, after inauguration, 330.
Confederacy, Southern, Jefferson Davis elected President of, 442.
forming of, 435.
manifesto for, 397.
Congress, 371.
condemnation of Republican policies in, by the South, 367.
confusion during secession strife, 375.
contingent which opposed Jefferson Davis on public questions, 329.
Douglas' work in, 324.
in turmoil after John Brown Raid, 378.
old issues revived with election of Buchanan, 326-327.
respect of entire personnel upon occasion of Jefferson Davis' famous compromise speech, 263.
recognition of Jefferson Davis' ability as Secretary of War, 293.
Thirtieth, seat of Jefferson Davis, 239.
Thirty-first, Jefferson Davis' part in, 260-264.
Congressional Mess, 251.
sojourn of Jefferson Davis and Varina Howell, 156-157.
Connecticut, 349.
Constitution, and the doctrine of States Rights, 368.
distaste for, 376.
Jefferson Davis' strict construction of, 242, 334.
made a fetich of, by Jefferson Davis, 332.
of the United States, 380.
Constitutionalist, 380.
Convention, National Democratic, in Charleston, 1860, 375-386.
Cooper, Colonel Samuel, 318.
mentioned by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 359.

Corpus Christi, War with Mexico, 198.
Coulson, Mrs., quotes Varina Howell on her wedding in a letter to Mrs. H. B. Kells, 99.
letter to Mrs. H. B. Kells quoting Varina Howell on her engagement, 82.
Coulsons, 99.
Crampton, his zeal for Great Britain, in enlisting Americans and foreigners in America, for service in the Crimean war, excerpt from *A Memoir,* 321.
Pierce's partiality to, 321-322, excerpt from *A Memoir,* 322.
"Cresap's House," on the Ohio river, visited by Jefferson Davis and Varina Howell on way to Washington, 142.
Crimea, 314, 315.
military commission to, 299, 300.
Crittenden, Thomas L., friend of Jefferson Davis, 216, 327.
compromise, and the Committee of Thirteen, 396-397, 399.
compromise, and Jefferson Davis, 416.
C Street, Washington, 257.
Cuba, resistance of Spanish authority, 251-255.
Cumberland Island Bill, Jefferson Davis' connection with showed his strict construction of the Constitution, 242.
Cushing, Caleb, referred to by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 282, 283, 358.

D

Dallas, George Mifflin, 95.
characterization of, by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 185-186.
quotations from his conversation at an evening at Mr. Robert J. Walker's, by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 179.
"Davis Bend," 230.
Davis, Col. Samuel Emory, Jefferson Davis' father, for whom Samuel Emory Davis, Jefferson Davis' son, was named, 271.
Jeff, son of Jefferson Davis and Varina Howell, 348, 411, 444, 352, 432, 455.
birth of, 322-323.
dangerous illness of, while on New England trip, as recorded in Varina Howell's *Memoir,* 358.
Jefferson, a distinguished figure as Secretary of War, 292-297.
a pupil and follower of Calhoun, 261, 263.
A Memoir by His Wife, original manuscript pages preserved in the Mississippi Historical Society, 245.
accusations against, of having knowingly abetted secession, 414-416.
activities, serving his first term in Congress, 162-167.
address at reception to his regiment, First Mississippi, New Orleans, 223.
advised to go away for a rest because of strain of constant public service, 348.
affection of his slaves, 229-231.
amendment to the Oregon Bill, 260.
and Abraham Lincoln, comparison between, 394.

and Douglas, imagined sympathy between, 324-325.
and his Presidential aspirations, 383.
and Pierce, divergence between, 305.
and the National Democratic Convention in 1860, 383.
and the Twenty-ninth Congress, 239.
and Varina Howell, desire to adopt graduate of Portland Free High School, as recorded in Varina Howell's *Memoir,* 355.
and Varina Howell, friendship with Seward, 372.
and Varina Howell, journey to Washington, 137-142.
and Varina Howell, their impending sense of tragedy at "Brierfield," 431-433.
and the Whigs, 137.
appearance and character described by William E. Dodd in the American Crisis Series, 278-279.
appointed to fill vacancy in United States Senate caused by death of Senator Jesse Speight, 236.
as candidate for governorship of Mississippi, and his defeat, 264-265.
as member of the lower house of Congress, 145.
as the South's standard bearer, 389.
as Varina Howell wrote of him at the time of his service in the War with Mexico, 221.
attitude of Brierfield slaves toward him, 279.
attitude toward Brierfield slaves, 438.
beginning of romance with Varina Howell, 51-58.
candidate, Democratic party, for seat in state legislature, 79.
characteristics, 96, 99, 100-101, 171, 172, 242, 271, 278, 279, 283, 284, 286, 288, 334, 335, 431, 432, 433.
as recorded by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 342.
extensive reader, 246.
comparison with Lincoln, 237.
conspicuous part in the Thirty-first Congress, 260-264.
Constitution made a fetich of, by, 332.
constructive work as Secretary of War, 294-297.
criticism of him and Varina Howell's reaction, 336.
of him during time he was Senator from Mississippi, and Varina Howell's reactions, 336.
debates with Webster and Clay, Thirty-first Congress, 261.
decision to go with his family for an outing in New England, 349.
defense of Webster, charged with improper use of funds, 164-167.
devotion to Varina Howell, 285-286.
distinguished service in the battle of Monterey, 214.
distrust of Douglas' plan, 379.
elected Colonel of the First Mississippi Regiment for the defense of Texas, War with Mexico, 198.
engagement in the Battle of Buena Vista, War with Mexico, 217.

evidence of criticism of the masses of, 288.
favorable attention of both Whig and Democrat, 260.
first impressions of Varina Howell, 60-61.
meeting with Varina Howell, 46.
friendship for Colonel Montgomery Meigs, 322.
general esteem for, at time of meeting with Varina Howell, 54-55.
health of, 371.
his acceptance of President Pierce's offer to join the Cabinet as Secretary of War, 274.
his appreciation of the confidence of the Southern women, 224.
his attention to public affairs, 362-365, 367-371.
his belief in institution of slavery, 331-332.
as a divine blessing shown in Varina Howell's *Memoir,* 334.
his desire that Mississippi delay secession, 404.
that the seceding states be permitted to go in peace, 431.
his development, as Secretary of War, of the West, 295-296.
his devotion to his wife, Varina Howell, 145, 147, 454.
his efforts to adjust matters between the North and the South, 393, 394, 399, 401.
his estimate of Calhoun quoted in Varina Howell's *Memoir,* 189.
his famous compromise speech in behalf of preservation of the Union, quotation from, 261-262.
his firm stand for Constitutional interpretation, 387, 393, 394, 399.
his life as member of Congress, 154-155.
his love of peace as shown in days before Civil War, 438.
his qualities for leadership, 237-238.
his recognition as one of the leaders in the House of Representatives, 151.
his religious faith, 145.
his resignation from the Senate, 405-410.
his seat in the United States Senate, 236-241.
his speech at Faneuil Hall while on his New England trip, as recorded by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 359.
his strict construction of the Constitution, 334.
his treatment of the "Brierfield" slaves, 275.
his views on emancipation, 231-233.
on the South and secession, 362-364, 367-371.
his wealth, 230.
ill health of, 265, 341.
at time of appointment to United States Senate, 238.
illness from wound received in War with Mexico, 229.
impressions of, by Varina Howell, during courtship, 59-60.
inauguration as President of the Confederacy, 453, 454, 455.
incidents of his tender consideration, excerpt from *A*

Memoir, by Varina Howell, 318-320.
intense interest in the opening up of the West, 331-332.
Kentuckian by birth, 236.
known as "Colonel" Davis, 367.
leader of forces of States' Rights, 341.
meeting with Margaret Louisa Howell, 22.
military activities, appointment as Major General in the Army in Mississippi, 430.
distinguished service in Black Hawk War, 90.
most intimate and trusted friend of President Pierce, 283, 285.
on the South's position, 326.
opposition to his return to the Senate, 326.
oratory, 90-91, 97-98.
pointed out as worthy successor to President Pierce, 283.
political activities, appointed on Committee of Military Affairs and Pensions, 242.
campaigning for Polk in Presidential campaign, 97.
debates on Cumberland Island Bill showing his strict construction of the Constitution, 242.
defeat by Foote in the canvass in Mississippi, 273.
defeat in the State Legislature, 90.
election of, as President of the Confederate States of America, 442.
first session in Congress, 175.
his debates on Mexico and the Mexican War in Congress, 242.
his refusal of President Pierce's offer of a seat in the Cabinet, 273.
in accord with Calhoun on all party questions, especially States' Rights as provided for in the Constitution, according to Varina Howell's *Memoir, Jefferson Davis, Letters, Papers and Speeches, Jefferson Davis Series,* 243.
made a member of the Library Committee, as a member of which he advocated Vattemare's international exchange of literature, 242.
named by President Polk as Regent of Smithsonian Institute, 242.
nomination as elector for Polk and Dallas, 95.
skirmish with Andrew Johnson over war issues, 175-177.
speaker for Calhoun at State Democratic Convention, 92.
political affiliations, 49, 50, 63, 82-84, 87-89, 88-89.
visit to the South, 367, 368, 369-371.
probabilities of having been sought for Presidency, 325-326.
reaction to election as President of Confederate States, 442.
reception tendered upon return from War with Mexico, 222-228.
to him, Colonel of First Mississippi, at New Orleans, 222-225.

recognized while a young man as a worthy successor to Calhoun, 244.
record in the Senate, 365.
religious faith, 290.
resemblance of his brand of democracy to Thomas Jefferson's, 332, 333.
resignation from Cabinet, Pierce's regret, excerpt from *A Memoir,* by Varina Howell, 327.
return from War with Mexico, 222.
home from Thirty-first Congress in hope to meet Whig element of state in debate, 264.
to "Brierfield" after victory of the Whigs, 267-279.
to seat of war after furlough, 215.
to Senate, 327.
to South after secession of Mississippi, 414-429.
revealing and interesting conversation with Sam Houston as told by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 195.
service as Secretary of War, 298-322.
in War with Mexico, 198.
sixty day leave from the War with Mexico, to visit his wife, in ill health, 214-215.
solicited by General Lopez to take charge of expedition to liberate Cuba from Spain, 251-254.
speech in Congress, on the Oregon question, 197.
suspicion against his sincerity, 363-364.
takes his seat in the United States Senate, 238.
the most distinguished member of Pierce's Cabinet, 298.
the outstanding secessionist to the Northern mind, 415.
tribute to his wife for her care during trouble with his eye, mentioned by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 342.
views on expansion, 254-255.
on slavery, 369-370.
Varina Howell's early estimate of, 55-58.
recognition of his similarity in personality to Calhoun, 190.
welcoming address to Calhoun, at Vicksburg, 1845, 132-133.
West Point Cadet, 82.
wound in foot, Battle of Buena Vista, War with Mexico, 217-218, 225.
Joe, son of Jefferson Davis and Varina Howell, 399, 411, 432, 444.
John, mentioned by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 194.
Joseph E., brother of Jefferson Davis, 11, 43, 46, 47, 51, 83, 90, 98, 120, 121, 158, 213, 371, 433, 454.
association with William B. Howell, 10-11.
character of, 75-76.
companionship with brother, Jefferson, 52.
estimate of his brother, Jefferson, as given to Varina Howell, 67.
friendship with William Howell, 18-22.
his arguments with Varina Howell in regard to

kitchen of new house at "Brierfield," 268.
his pride in Jefferson Davis' wife, Varina Howell, 137-138.
his wealth, 230.
irate over Republican policies, 368.
meeting with brother, Jefferson, upon his return from War with Mexico, 225.
on the courtship of his brother, Jefferson, and Varina Howell, 75-76.
pleasure in the political success and patriotism of his brother, Jefferson Davis, 203.
Margaret Howell, daughter of Jefferson Davis and Varina Howell, 315, 320, 348, 411, 432.
birth of, 290.
characterized by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 354.
decision to have her go to Montgomery, 446.
mentioned by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 352.
referred to by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 357.
Mr. and Mrs. John, 257.
Mrs. Samuel, mother of Joseph and Jefferson Davis, 103-106.
Samuel, father of Joseph and Jefferson Davis, 66-67, 103, 104.
Samuel Emory, first child of Jefferson Davis and Varina Howell, at the age of two, much beloved by Mrs. Pierce, 284-285.
born 1853, 271.
death, 289, 432.
named after Jefferson Davis' father, Col. Samuel Emory Davis, 271.
Dearborns, the, referred to by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 353.
Delafield, Colonel, 299.
Delaware, her request for dissolution of the Union, 395.
Democrats, 49, 63, 83-84, 85, 88-89, 90-92, 95, 98, 100, 101, 130, 176, 274, 276, 331, 359, 363, 364, 370.
and Calhoun, 380.
association with Jefferson Davis and Varina Howell, 361.
attitude on Mississippi State Legislature endorsement of Jefferson Davis' position on Clay Compromise, and on its condemnation of Governor Foote, Mississippi gubernatorial contest, 266.
Davis home sought by, during Jefferson Davis' illness, 341.
Douglas favored by some, 324.
favorable comment on Jefferson Davis, 260.
nettled at Whig victory in gubernatorial contest, 266.
of Mississippi, fearful of return of Whig power after General Quitman's withdrawal from gubernatorial contest, appeal to Jefferson Davis to contest for gubernatorial place, 264-265.
"Old Line," 380.
recognition by, of Jefferson Davis, 236.
struggle against combination of Republicans and Abolitionists, 370.
their strength now matched by the Republicans, 362.

Varina Howell, a social favorite of, 371.
and Jefferson Davis admired by, 439.
views of expansionist leaders, 254-255.
Department of Justice, New Orleans, 224.
Devereux, excerpt concerning, from *A Memoir,* 256.
"Diamond Place," home of Mrs. David McCaleb, Varina Howell's visit, 46-48, 51.
"Diary, A, from Dixie," by Mary Boykin Chestnut, 292.
Dickenson, Daniel S., 157.
District of Columbia, improvement of, by Jefferson Davis, Secretary of War, 294-295.
Disowned, excerpt concerning, from *A Memoir,* 256.
Dissolution of the Union in the Thirty-sixth Congress, 387-397.
Dix, Col., mentioned by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 149, 194.
Dobbin, Mr., Secretary of the Navy, referred to by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 283.
his difficulties over projected reorganization of Navy, Jefferson Davis' administration of War Department, excerpt from *A Memoir,* by Varina Howell, 317.
Dodd, William E., comment on Douglas and National Democratic convention in 1860, 380.
Jefferson Davis described by, in the American Crisis Series, 278-279.
Dodge, General Augustus, mentioned by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 194.
Don Juan, excerpt concerning, from *A Memoir,* 256.
Douglas, Stephen A., 327.
and Jefferson Davis, imagined sympathy between, 324-325.
and "Squatter Sovereignty," 380, 381, 382, 384.
and the National Democratic Convention in 1860, 380-382, 383.
characterization of, 324, 325.
mentioned by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 185.
program to co-ordinate all opinions, 379-380.
reopening of slavery question, 324, 325.
Varina Howell's first impressions of Washington, 148.
Dragoons, Mississippi, service with Andrew Jackson, 222.
Dred Scott Decision, 380.
Dubuque, 100.
Duncans, 99.
Duncan's Battery, 201.
Dupree, killing of, connection with charges against Webster of improper use of funds, excerpt from *A Memoir,* by Varina Howell, 165.
Dwights, 349.

E

Edgeworth, Miss, excerpt concerning, from *A Memoir,* 256.
Emmet Rebellion of 1798, participation of the Kempes, 13.
Emory, General, 315.
Mrs. William H., friendship with Varina Howell, 373.
her wit commented on by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 180.

England, and America, acerbity between, over Crampton's interest in the Crimean War, 321.
military commission to, 299.
Europe, tour by Mr. and Mrs. Pierce and Nathaniel Hawthorne, 330.
Eustis, Captain, 218.
Everett, Edward, 301, 313.
mentioned by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 192, 358.
Expansion of territory, views on, by Jefferson Davis and other Democratic leaders, 254, 255.

F

Faneuil Hall, Jefferson Davis' speech at, while on New England trip, mentioned in Varina Howell's *Memoir,* 359.
Federal party, 242.
First Mississippi regiment, Joseph Davis Howell's service in, under Jefferson Davis, 206.
Florida secedes from the Union, 403, 405.
withdrawal from National Democratic Convention in 1860, 381.
Floyd, John B., leader of the South, 422.
Foote, Henry S., 211.
comments on James Kempe in *Casket of Reminiscences.*
comments on Dr. George Graham, 14.
Forest, Mrs., 313.
Fort Crawford, 100, 199.
Gibson, 100.
Rosalie, near Natchez, home of William Burr Howell and Margaret Louisa Howell, excerpt from *The Southwest by a Yankee,* 28.
Teneria, 215.
Wanebago, 100.
Worth, 316.
Fortress Monroe, 315.
Foster, Mr., 157.
Fourteenth Street, Washington, home of Jefferson Davis and Varina Howell, 323.
France, military commission to, 299.
Free Soilers, 331.
Republicans a lineal descendant, 370.
Fremont, Mrs. Jessie Anne, mentioned in Varina Howell's *Memoir,* 193.
"Friend," Mr. Hallowell, Beckett Kempe Howell's school teacher, was a, 309.
Friends, Society of, 5, 8.

G

Gaines, Mrs. Myra Clarke, Varina Howell's first meeting with, 148.
General, 112.
Gales, Mrs., 257.
Gallena Lead Mines, 100.
Georgia, 442.
secedes from the Union, 403.
Germantown, Battle of, Richard Howell's distinguished service in, 6.
Gibson, Colonel George, 312.
General, excerpt concerning, from *A Memoir,* by Varina Howell, 310, 311.
Giddings, Joshua, 176.
Gladstone, Mrs., mentioned by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 181.
Government, federal, South alarmed over encroachment of, 362.
Gracie, General and Mrs., 313.
Graham, Dr. George, father-in-law of James Kempe, 14, 453.

Margaret, grandmother of Varina Howell, 71.
Grahams, ancestors of Varina Howell, characteristics, 4-5, 42, 153, 211, 230, 340.
"Great Heart," Judge George Winchester, Varina Howell's tutor, 85, 86, 105, 125, 144, 163, 286, 287, 436.
Judge Winchester, influence on Varina Howell, 340, 436.
Greeley, Horace, "Let the South Go," 395.
Green, Col. Charles, referred to by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 358.
Senator, 257.
Grund, reporter of the Senate, description of Mr. Benton in *The New York Herald,* 187.
Gulf States, 364.
Gunn, Dr. William, 131.
Guthrie, Mr., referred to by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 282.

H

Hale Bill, 244.
Hallowell, school teacher of Beckett Kempe Howell, Varina Howell's brother, 309.
Hamilton, Alexander, 79, 245, 335, 375, 447.
views on States' Rights, 332, 333.
Hare, Dr. Robert, noted chemist, excerpt concerning, from *A Memoir,* 308.
Harney, Gen., referred to by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 343, 344.
Harpers Ferry, John Brown Raid, 376, 377.
Harrison, Mrs. Burton, comments on Varina Howell, 3.
Hawthorne, Nathaniel, 315.
traveler with Mr. and Mrs. Pierce, through Europe, 330.
Hayes, Dr., Jefferson Davis attended by, when his eye was inflamed, mentioned by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 342.
Henry, Professor Joseph, excerpt concerning, from *A Memoir,* by Varina Howell, 308-309, 310.
Hetzel, Mrs., 323.
Hinds, Colonel, 15, 42.
"Horseback," a road traversed by the Davis family on their New England trip, described by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 356.
Hotspurs, of the South, 364.
House, the, impression of Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 184.
Houston, Mrs., letters of Varina Howell to, telling of arrangement for Varina Howell to join her husband in Montgomery, 444.
Sam, characterization by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 195.
revealing and interesting conversation with Jefferson Davis as told by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 195.
Howell, 86, 98-99, 340, 446.
ancestry, 1-11.
attitude toward Jefferson Davis, 97.
history, 5-11.
emigration from Wales to Delaware, 5.
removal from Delaware to New Jersey, 5.
located in New Orleans, 431.
political tendencies changed by

marriage of Varina Howell to Jefferson Davis, 236.
Kempe, Varina Howell's brother, 239, 328, 365.
and Professor Joseph Henry, 309-310.
cared for in Washington, 281.
Dr. Lewis, brother of Richard Howell, 5-6.
death, 6.
service in the American Revolution, 6.
Franklin, said to be listed as John Howell in "The Naval Monument," 9.
service in the American Revolution, 9.
Jefferson Davis, brother of Varina Howell, 273, 301, 328, 365.
baptism of, referred to by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 343.
illness of, referred to by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 343.
Varina Howell's reference to his death in her *Memoir,* 343.
John, listed in "The Naval Monument," said to be Franklin Howell, 9.
Joseph Davis, brother of Varina Howell, 20, 21.
pride in service under Jefferson Davis, during War with Mexico, 206.
War with Mexico, 204-205.
Louisa Kempe, 118.
Margaret Graham, sister of Varina Howell, 290, 327, 365, 366.
cared for in Washington, 281.
Margaret Louisa, mother of Varina Howell, 82, 93.
meeting with Jefferson Davis, 22.
Richard, grandfather of Varina Howell, appointment as Major, 5-6.
characteristics as described in Varina Howell's *A Memoir,* 7.
literary tendencies, 7.
death, 7.
election as Governor of New Jersey, 7.
instance of sacrifice for his brother, Lewis, 6.
marriage to Keziah Burr, 5.
service in the American Revolution, 5-6.
assisted in expedition against Quebec, 6.
episode of destroying tea, 5.
made Captain of the Fifth Company, Second Battalion in New Jersey line, 5.
recipient of high commendation from General George Washington for distinguished conduct in battles of Brandywine, Monmouth and Germantown, 6.
Sarah, daughter of Gov. Richard Howell, later Mrs. James Agnew, 7.
William Burr, father of Varina Howell, 8-9, 16, 71, 83, 101, 206, 213, 454.
association with Joseph Emory Davis, 10-11.
friendship with Joseph E. Davis, 18-22.
marriage with Margaret Louisa Kempe, 18-19.
service in the War of 1812, 8.
distinguished conduct in the Battle of the Lakes, 9.
trip down the Mississippi on a flatboat, 9.
Varina, ability to write good letters, 246.

a brilliant figure during the Thirty-sixth Congress, 326.
accompanies her husband to Washington, the perils and discomforts of the journey, 138-142.
account of, in her *Memoir*, of New England trip, 348-360.
account of National Democratic Convention of 1860, 383, 384.
acquaintance and friendship with Calhoun, 129-136, 135.
a leading spirit in resenting aggressions upon the South, 417.
A Memoir, excerpt on Buchanan's inauguration, 329-330.
and her friendship with Mrs. Joseph E. Johnston, 372-373, 374.
and her husband, Jefferson Davis, their marital relations of the happiest nature, 240-241.
and Jefferson Davis, courtship at "The Hurricane," 51-81.
and Jefferson Davis, desire to adopt graduate of Portland Free High School, as recorded in Varina Howell's *Memoir*, 355.
and Jefferson Davis, evidence of intimate and common knowledge of each other's lives, 100.
and Jefferson Davis, sorrow in death of infant son, Samuel, 289-290.
and Jefferson Davis, their impending sense of tragedy at "Brierfield," 431-433.
and Joseph Davis, 59, 62-64.
anxiety over Jefferson Davis' affiliations with Democratic party, 79.
appearance at age of seventeen, 43.
a product of a staid social order, 69-70.
a ravenous reader, 246.
arrangement to join her husband in Montgomery as recorded in *A Memoir* and in letters to Mrs. Houston, 444.
a social favorite in both Whig and Democratic circles, 274.
as she was at the age of twenty, in Washington political and social life, 161-164.
assistance in preparation of Jefferson Davis' speeches, 255.
as wife of Jefferson Davis, Secretary of War, 298-322.
attendance at Episcopal church, excerpt from *The Southwest by a Yankee*, 39.
attendance at Madame Greenland's School in Philadelphia, 43, 86.
at the time of Jefferson Davis' appointment to the Cabinet of President Pierce, probably one of the most accomplished and best educated women in official circles, 277, 284.
a woman of industry, 265.
beginning of romance with Jefferson Davis, 51-58.
birth, 23.
and childhood, 18-25.

birth of her daughter, Margaret Howell Davis, 290.
birthright, 1-2, 4, 93.
bridal tour, 102-113.
visit to "Locust Grove," home of Jefferson Davis' sister, 102.
visit to New Orleans, 106-113.
visit to "Rosemont," home of Jefferson Davis' mother, 103.
visit to St. Charles Hotel, New Orleans, 106-110.
christening, 25.
close student as a Senator's wife of all governmental questions as shown in her *Memoir,* 245.
close touch with War with Mexico, during her husband's participation, 211-212.
comment upon her husband's taking his seat in the United States Senate from *A Memoir,* 239.
comment on Jefferson Davis' famous compromise speech, 262.
complete confidence in and of her husband, 414.
criticism of her as first lady of the Confederacy, 452.
departure, with her husband, Jefferson Davis, from Washington, 198-200.
description of, by Natchez friends, 284.
description of her appearance by Richmond newspaper reporters, 277.
development at the age of seventeen, 55-58.
development of her personality as result of public and social life of Washington, 245-248.
devotion of Jefferson Davis to her, 285-286.
devotion to her brother, Joseph Davis, 206.
devotion to Jefferson Davis, 95, 96, 100, 178, 234-235, 277, 279, 287, 454.
early education, 40.
early estimate of Jefferson Davis, 55-58.
early environment, Natchez, 26-41.
early married life at "Brierfield," Jefferson Davis' plantation, 114-126.
education, 42-43.
end of the visit to "Hurricane," the home of Joseph Davis, 78-81.
engagement, 82-89.
attitude of her parents toward Jefferson Davis' political affiliations, 83.
her engagement to Jefferson Davis confided to her parents, 82.
her engagement to Jefferson Davis confided to Judge Winchester, 87-89.
her uneasiness about Jefferson Davis' affiliations with the Democratic element, 82-84, 88-89, 93-96.
entrance into society, 43-49.
excerpt from *A Memoir,* on Frederika Bremer's, Swedish novelist's visit to the United States, 257-259.
excerpt from *A Memoir,* 111.
failing health, 94-95.
faith in her husband, Jefferson Davis, upon his departure for War with Mexico, 199-200, 202, 203-204.

first glimpses of Washington, 144-151.
first glimpses of Washington ceremonies of the assembling of Congress, 145.
impressions of society and political life, 148-151.
visit to the White House, 151-152.
witnessing ceremonies of the assembling of Congress, 145.
first impression of Jefferson Davis, in letter to her mother, 48-49.
meeting with Jefferson Davis, 46.
separation from her husband, Jefferson Davis, upon his departure for War with Mexico, 203-205.
girlhood, 42-49.
her abilities as a housekeeper, 240.
her appearance and intellect at time when Jefferson Davis' first term in Congress, 154-155, 156, 157-159.
her appearance and manner at time of marriage, 108-112.
her appreciation of her husband's tribute to her care of him during trouble with his eye, as recorded in her *Memoir,* 342.
her aspirations at the time Jefferson Davis was a Senator, 246.
her attitude toward, and treatment of the slaves at "Brierfield," 269, 275-276.
dress spoken of in her *Memoir,* 440.
her character strengthening, 451.
her characteristics in general, 1, 4, 88, 93, 94, 96, 100, 169, 171, 244, 245, 247, 248, 267, 269, 277-278, 286-288, 340-341, 431, 432, 433, 439-440, 449-450.
her charm and her intellect, 291-292.
her complete change in political tendencies, eager for downfall of the Whigs, 264.
her deep affection for Judge Winchester, 448-449.
her desire to make a permanent home at "Brierfield," 248, 271.
her devotion to her husband's career, 234-235.
her distinguished position in Washington society, 412-413.
her eager interest in the career of her husband, Jefferson Davis, 145.
her enjoyment of social life in the Capitol, 181-182.
her excellencies as a housekeeper, 117-119.
her feelings as wife of the President of the Confedate States, 444, 448.
her generosity to relations, 448.
her gradual conversions to her husband's political tendencies, 123.
her health, 97.
her heritage from James Kempe, 286.
her high sense of duty, 234.
her immersion in the affairs of her husband, Jefferson Davis, 154-155.
her impressions of Calhoun, 131-132, 134-135.
her impressions of Douglas, 384.
her impressions of her husband, Jefferson Davis, as

a public speaker, excerpt from *A Memoir,* 133-134.
her impressions of life in Senatorial circles at the period of the Thirtieth Congress, 248.
her insight into the country's history, 384.
her intense interest in people and the world as shown in her *Memoir,* 178.
her introduction to political life, 127-136.
her literary ability, 284.
her love and admiration for her husband, Jefferson Davis, 146-147.
her love of the South, 447-448.
her loyalty, 88, 100.
her marked social ability, 290-292.
her mingled feelings of love and hate at time of dissolution of Union, 399-400.
her nature, "would have made a good soldier," 128.
her political ambitions for her husband, Jefferson Davis, 366-367.
her reactions to criticism of Jefferson Davis during time he was Senator from Mississippi, 336.
her realization that her husband was confronted with grave problem, that of the South, 371.
her refusal to admit that her husband was losing political strength in the South, 367-368.
her simple dress, 328.
her skill in making charming portraits of public men and women as shown in her *Memoir,* 178.
her social life when Jefferson Davis was Secretary of War, 291-292.
her social relations strained as result of abolition movement, 337-340.
her steadfastness to her Southern ideas, 153, 159.
her supervision of the plantation, "Brierfield," during her husband's engagement in the War with Mexico, 268.
her tutor, Judge George Winchester, 207.
her witnessing the ceremonies of the assembling of Congress, 145.
ill health, 213-214.
impressions of her in Washington society, 154, 156.
impressions of Jefferson Davis during courtship, 59-60.
in *A Memoir,* speaks of Jefferson Davis' efforts to solve problem of slavery, 370.
influence on her of early training, 451.
on her of Judge Winchester, 246, 340.
on her, indicated in her *Memoir,* of Judge Winchester, 286.
interest in her husband's political affairs, 127-136.
in the political life of her husband, Jefferson Davis, 161-167.
in her family and relatives, 350.
in Washington while Jefferson Davis made political tour of the South, 365.
knowledge of politics, 88, 95-96.
life as a senator's wife, 242-250.
love for "Brierfield," 114-125.

love the dominant motive of her being, 145.
manner of entertaining in Washington, excerpt from *A Memoir,* 307.
meeting with her husband, Jefferson Davis, upon his return from War with Mexico, 225-228.
mention of her sister who became ex-President Tyler's granddaughter-in-law, 174.
now a careworn woman, 405-413.
one of the most brilliant women of her time, 419-420.
on the Baltimore Convention, 385.
part played by the political world in the early home life at "Brierfield," 124.
personal appearance, 348.
political standing at the time Jefferson Davis was Senator from Mississippi, 335-336.
position in society, 328.
prominent part in Washington political life, 371-372.
reaction to Jefferson Davis' election as President of Confederate States, 442-443.
realization, after the War with Mexico, that her husband, Jefferson Davis, belonged to the people, 225-226.
reference to the loss of her first child, 351.
religious nature, 145, 200, 247, 290, 350, 443, 445.
return to "Brierfield," after victory of the Whigs, 267-279.
return to South after secession of Mississippi, 414-429.
return to Washington to join Jefferson Davis who had become War Minister, 281.
separation from her husband, Jefferson Davis, upon his departure for War with Mexico, 203-205.
social life during her husband's term in United States Senate, 252.
social prestige, 265-266.
sorrow over her husband's defeat in gubernatorial contest in Mississippi, 265.
stays at "The Hurricane," during her husband's engagement in the War with Mexico, 208-212.
sympathetic nature shown by her understanding of Jefferson Davis' first marriage, 102-103, 116.
tribute to, by her friends, 350.
visit at Natchez, after departure of her husband, Jefferson Davis, for the War with Mexico, 206-208.
visit to Joseph Davis' home, "The Hurricane," 51-81.
wedding, a topic of interest throughout the state, 101.
wedding ceremony on Feb. 26, 1845, 98.
Hunter, R. M. T., mentioned by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 194.
"Hurricane, The," home of Joseph E. Davis, 43, 46, 47, 66, 69-76, 97, 111, 114, 117, 120, 122, 158, 203, 219, 230, 268, 269, 368, 371, 419, 433.
description of, 65-66.
Varina Howell's departure from, during his engagement in the War of Mexico, because of her ill health, 213.
visit, 51-81.

where Varina Howell stayed during her husband's engagement in the War with Mexico, 208-212.

I

Impending Crisis, The, the kindling of the antipathy between North and South by this publication, 387-388.
Ingersoll, Charles, described by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 178-179.
inquiries into Webster's conduct as Secretary of State, excerpt from *A Memoir,* by Varina Howell, 165-166.
Ingersolls, the, referred to by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 185.
Irwin, Mrs., mentioned by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 180.
Isthmus, 306.

J

Jackson, Andrew, 15, 16, 42, 49, 50, 79, 428, 431.
and Chalmette Plains, 224.
his Tennesseans and Mississippi Dragoons, 222.
Varina Howell taught by Judge Winchester to scorn his political doctrine and methods, 335.
Jackson, Mississippi, resolution offered by Jefferson Davis for establishing a mail route, 163.
visit to, by Jefferson Davis and Varina Howell en route home after secession, 428-429.
from Thirty-first Congress, 264.
Jamaica, Jefferson Davis' views on emancipation, 233.
Japan, first expedition to, 303.
government of, presents sent by, excerpt from *A Memoir,* by Varina Howell, 303-304.
visit of Japanese princes to Washington, excerpt from *A Memoir,* by Varina Howell, 321.
Jay, 447.
Jefferson Barracks, 100.
Jefferson Davis, A Memoir by His Wife, see *A Memoir.*
Jefferson Davis, by William E. Dodd, 288.
Jefferson Davis, Letters, Papers and Speeches, given as authority for Jefferson Davis' accord with Calhoun on party questions, 243.
Jefferson Davis Series, given as authority for Jefferson Davis' accord with Calhoun on party questions, 243.
Jefferson, Thomas, 88, 89, 95, 101, 375.
Jefferson Davis' study of his mind, 335.
reference to his letters in Varina Howell's *Memoir,* 186.
resemblance of Jefferson Davis' brand of democracy to his, 332, 333.
Jessup, General, 310, 311.
excerpt concerning, from *A Memoir,* by Varina Howell, 299, 311.
Johnson, Andrew, skirmish with Jefferson Davis over war issues, 175-177.
Reverdy, mentioned by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 194.
Johnston, Mrs. Joseph E., social connection with Varina Howell, 371-373, 374.
Jones, General, 157.

Jordan, Patrick, messenger of War Department, 305, 320.

K

Kane, Mrs., 308.
Kansas, 379.
John Brown Raid, of, 376.
Kells, Mrs. H. B., conversations with, about Varina Howell, 351.
comments on Varina Howell's feelings on the death of Judge Winchester, 87.
description of Varina Howell's appearance, 276.
remembrances of Varina Howell, 328.
Kempe, James, grandfather of Varina Howell, 12-18, 83, 310, 311.
and wife, parents of Margaret Louisa, 18.
characteristics, 12.
duel with Bernard Hoe, 14.
host to Aaron Burr, 16.
marriage to Dr. George Graham's daughter, 15.
military activities, captain of the Natchez troop of Horse, War of 1812, 15.
colonel of the Mississippi Cavalry, 15.
Varina Howell's heritage from, 286.
Louisa Graham, 118, 119.
Margaret Louisa, wife of William Burr, mother of Varina Howell, 18.
Matthew, 13.
origin of name, 12.
Richard, Secretary of Virginia, later acting governor, 12.
Sir Robert, 12-13.
Kempes, ancestors of Varina Howell, 4, 12-17, 83, 153, 209, 211, 230, 340, 452.
"Kempton," home of James Kempe, 42, 310.
Kentucky, 188, 447.
withdrawal from National Democratic Convention in 1860, 381.
King, D. P., connection with charges against Webster of improper use of funds, excerpt from *A Memoir,* by Varina Howell, 167.
Mr. and Mrs. Charles, 313.
Mr., mentioned by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 194.
Rev. Starr, a friend of Varina Howell and Jefferson Davis whom they met on New England trip, characterized by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 354.
T. Butler, connection with charges against Webster of improper use of funds, excerpt from *A Memoir,* 166.
Kock, Paul de, excerpt concerning, from *A Memoir,* 256.

L

Lafayette, 253.
Square, New Orleans, reception to First Mississippi, Jefferson Davis in command, 223, 224.
Lakes, Battle of, William Burr Howell's distinguished conduct in, 9.
Lawson, General, 310.
Lee, Robert E., 269, 452.
capture of John Brown, 377.
friendship with Varina Howell and Jefferson Davis, 253-254.
refusal to assist General Lopez in release of Cuba from Spain, 253.

solicited to help free Cuba from Spain, 251.
Legate to America, sent by Pius IX during Pierce's administration, excerpt concerning from *A Memoir,* by Varina Howell, 320-321.
Lewis, Dixon H., referred to by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 193-194.
Major-General, reception to First Mississippi, New Orleans, 223.
Library Committee, Jefferson Davis appointed on, 242.
Lincoln, Abraham, 437.
abolition movement and the election of, 337.
and Jefferson Davis, comparison between, 394.
and the abolition doctrine, 389.
call for troops to invade the South, 403.
coming into prominence, 378, 382, 385.
comparison with Jefferson Davis, 237.
early views on the abolition of slaves, 243.
mentioned by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 185.
opposition to war with Mexico, 197.
position of "no compromise whatever," 396.
Varina Howell's first glimpses of, 149.
Mrs. Abraham, comparison with Varina Howell, 240-241.
Little, Col., referred to by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 353.
"Little Giant," Douglas, 380.
"Locust Grove," home of Mrs. Luther Smith, sister of Jefferson Davis, 102, 103.
Lopez, General, description of, by Varina Howell, 252, 253.
execution of, by Spanish authorities, 254.
on mission to seek aid for Cuba's release from Spain, 251-253.
Louisiana, 166.
Louisiana secedes from the Union, 403.
withdrawal from National Democratic Convention in 1860, 381.
Lymans, 349.

M

Maine, 194.
Mammy Jane, 84, 452.
Manifesto, from Southern representatives in Congress, 397.
Mann, A. Dudley, friendship between him and Jefferson Davis, excerpt from *A Memoir,* by Varina Howell, 314.
Mansion, Executive, 283.
Mansion, 174.
"Mansion House," Natchez, excerpt from *The Southwest by a Yankee,* 30.
Marcy, Governor, 283, 295, 330.
described by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 183-184.
mentioned by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 283.
Mrs., referred to by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 183.
Martinique, atrocities in, referred to by Jefferson Davis in his views on emancipation, 233.
Maryland, 194.
Massachusetts, 194.
Varina Howell's knowledge of, from her tutor, 349.

"masses, democratic," Varina Howell's further acquaintance with them when she accompanies her husband to Washington, 139-141.
Mason, 295.
Mason, James M., mentioned by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 194.
Matamoras, 175.
Maxwell, General, 6.
McCaleb, Mrs. David, eldest daughter of Joseph E. Davis, 46, 57.
McCaleb, son-in-law of Joseph E. Davis, 57.
McClellan, Captain, 299, 300.
Jefferson Davis' appreciation of, 301.
McClung, Alexander K., service in the War with Mexico, 222.
McCracken, Mrs., 313.
McDuffie, Mr., colleague of Calhoun, mentioned in Varina Howell's *Memoir* in connection with Jefferson Davis' reference to joint occupancy of Oregon, 189.
Varina Howell's first impression of, 148.
McLane, Mrs. Allen, her wit and understanding praised by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 180.
McLeod, connection with charges against Webster of improper use of funds, excerpt from *A Memoir,* by Varina Howell, 165.
McWillie, Gov., mentioned by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 248.
Meigs, Colonel Montgomery, in charge of extension of the Capitol, 322.
Jefferson Davis' friendship for, 322.
Johnnie, son of Colonel Montgomery Meigs, 322.
Melbourne, Lord, comparison with Seward, 372.
Memoir, A, 99, 102, 111, 112, 120, 164, 213, 214, 292, 374, 452.
account of people, places and events connected with New England trip of Varina Howell and family, 348-360.
attestations of Jefferson Davis' defense of States' Rights, 416.
attitude toward dress spoken of, in, 440.
characterization in, of Varina Howell's daughter, Maggie Davis, 354.
charming portraits of public men and women, 178.
comment by Varina Howell on a certain hard ride of Jefferson Davis, 92.
on Gov. Howell, 7.
on her wedding, 99.
on Jefferson Davis, 154-155, 157, 345.
description of the death of John Quincy Adams, 196.
of life at "Brierfield," 270.
evidence given by Varina Howell of Jefferson Davis' belief in slavery as a divine blessing, 334.
of intimate and common knowledge of each other's lives of Varina Howell and Jefferson Davis, 100.
of Mr. Seward's affection for Jefferson Davis, 345.
of Varina Howell's intense interest in people and the world, 178.

of Varina Howell's knowledge of governmental questions when her husband was in the Senate, 245.
of Varina Howell's self-sacrificing nature, 450.
excerpt from, concerning Calhoun, 134-135.
Buchanan's inauguration, 329-330.
death of infant son, Samuel, 289.
first glimpses of Washington, 151.
Frederika Bremer's, Swedish novelist's, visit to the United States, 257-259.
Ingersoll's charges against Webster, 165.
Jeff Howell and Jefferson Davis, 301.
Jefferson Davis, 162.
as a public speaker, 133-134.
Jefferson Davis on leave from War with Mexico, 214.
resignation from Cabinet, and Pierce's regret, 327.
Pierce's administration, 298-323.
literature of her day, 256, 259.
standard of social conduct, 159.
Varina Howell's faith in her husband, 421.
Varina Howell's feelings on secession, 418.
Varina Howell's journey to Washington, 141-143.
Varina Howell's position as a politician's wife, 127-128.
Gen. Harney referred to by Varina Howell, 343, 344.
impressions of John Quincy Adams, 175-177.
of life in Senatorial circles at the period of the Thirtieth Congress, 248.
of political and social characters in Washington when Jefferson Davis was a Congressman, 178-196.
indications in, of Judge Winchester's influence on Varina Howell, 286.
Jefferson Davis' ability as Secretary of War, 293.
record of arrangement for Varina Howell to join her husband in Montgomery, 444.
of Jefferson Davis' speech at Faneuil Hall while on New England trip, 359.
reference to Col. Edwin V. Sumner, 343.
to Dallas Bache, 346.
to Jeff Davis' illness on New England trip, 358.
to Jefferson Davis' health, 426.
to Lord and Lady Napier, 344, 345.
to Maggie Davis, Varina Howell's daughter, 357.
to Mr. Seward's views on slavery, 346.
to President Buchanan, 344.
to the doctors who attended Jefferson Davis during trouble with his eye, 342.
to the joint occupancy of Oregon, 189.
to *Thirty Years in the Senate* by Mr. Benton, 347.
to Varina Howell's brother, Jefferson Davis Howell, 343.
son, Jeff Davis, 352.
to Washington people at the time Jefferson Davis was War Minister, 282-283.
revealing and interesting conversation of Sam Houston and Jefferson Davis

recalled by Varina Howell, 195.
reveals friendship with William H. Seward, 329.
the trip to "Brierfield," from Washington, 201.
tribute to James Pemberton, 275.
Varina Howell's appreciation of her husband's tribute to her care of him during trouble with his eye, 342.
characterization of Mr. Seward, 347.
comments on neglect of trees and shrubs of "Brierfield," 441.
daughter, Margaret Davis, mentioned in *A Memoir,* 352.
to Judge Winchester, 87.
Memoirs, of Anthony Campbell, bearing on history of the Kempes, 13.
Mexican War, see War with Mexico.
Mexico, 343, 437.
dismemberment of, views of Democratic party concerning, 254.
Jefferson Davis' debates on, 242.
Miller, Dr. Thomas, the Davis' family physician and friend, mentioned by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 342.
Mississippi, 248, 273, 349.
Dept. of Archives and History, record of neglect of "Brierfield" trees and shrubs, 441.
First Regiment in War with Mexico, 217.
Jefferson Davis in command, tribute to, by the New Orleans Picayune, 222-223.
Historical Society, old records state that shrubs were imported from Europe for "Brierfield" and "The Hurricane," 269.
preservation in, of original manuscript pages of *Jefferson Davis, a Memoir by His Wife,* 245.
Jefferson Davis as Senator from, 239.
loss in death of General John Anthony Quitman, 329.
secedes from the Union, 403, 405.
withdrawal from National Democratic Convention, 381.
Whigs in, 363.
Mississippi River, boating at the time of William B. Howell's trip to Natchez, 9.
Missouri Compromise, efforts of Douglas to destroy, 324.
Republicans' protest of repeal of, 370.
Mobile, 228, 281.
Money, secret-service charges against Webster, 164-167.
discussion between Tyler and Jefferson Davis, 173.
Monmouth, Battle of, Richard Howell's distinguished service in, 6.
Monterey, Battle of, 222, 252.
Jefferson Davis' distinguished service, 214, 430.
horse, Tartar, in action, 215.
Montgomery, 445, 446.
place at which Jefferson Davis was elected President of the Confederacy, 442.
resolution offered by Jefferson Davis for establishing a mail route, 163.
Mordecai, Major, portrait of, from *A Memoir,* by Varina Howell, 299.

Morse, telegraph, Varina Howell's comment on, 160.
Matthew, Irish temperance orator, resolution commended by Seward that Matthew be permitted to sit in box of Senate, 263.
Mount Humpback, visited by Davis family on New England trip, described by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 355-357.
Muzzy, Mr., mentioned by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 353.

N

Napier, Lady, tribute to, by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 344, 345.
Lord, a visitor of Jefferson Davis during trouble with his eye, referred to by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 344.
Natchez, 7, 73, 85, 93, 97, 103, 118, 130, 137, 153, 161, 170, 199, 200, 203, 207, 209, 228, 235, 251, 254, 267, 269, 274, 276, 291, 292, 310, 311, 349, 365, 431, 437, 441, 447, 448.
curiosity about and criticism of townspeople of marriage of Varina Howell and Jefferson Davis, 98-99.
description of Varina Howell's appearance by friends of, 284.
early home of Varina Howell, excerpt from *The Southwest by a Yankee,* 26-40.
educational institutions, excerpt from *The Southwest by a Yankee,* 26.
home of William Burr Howell and Margaret Louise Howell, 19.
meeting place of Varina Howell and her husband, Jefferson Davis, upon his return from War with Mexico, 225.
reception to First Mississippi, Jefferson Davis, colonel, upon return from War with Mexico, 225-226.
removal to, of William B. Howell, 9-10.
settlement at, of the Kempes, 13, 15.
social prestige of Varina Howell and Jefferson Davis, 265.
Varina Howell's stay here with her parents during her husband's engagement, 213-226.
visits here by Varina Howell, after her marriage, 121.
National Era, 244.
National Exposition, the first exhibition of the sewing machine, 170-171.
Varina Howell's and Jefferson Davis' delight and interest in, 169-171.
National Hotel, Washington, 329.
temporary lodgings of Jefferson Davis and Varina Howell, 143.
National Intelligencer, The, 49, 50, 63.
Navy, dissatisfaction in, during Jefferson Davis' administration of War Department, excerpt from *A Memoir,* by Varina Howell, 317-318.
retiring list, Jefferson Davis' efforts to secure, excerpt from *A Memoir,* by Varina Howell, 317-318.
Navy Island, connection with charges against Webster of improper use of funds,

excerpt from *A Memoir,* by Varina Howell, 165.
Neighbors, excerpt concerning, from *A Memoir,* 256.
New England, attitude on War with Mexico, 294.
dissolution of the Union regarded as a right by, 395.
Jefferson Davis' visit to, 361.
a matter of condemnation, 363-364, 365.
New Hampshire, 243.
New Jersey, 5, 7, 10, 11, 18, 93, 287, 447.
New Orleans, 17, 138, 151, 228, 268, 269, 281, 371, 446.
bridal tour by Varina Howell and Jefferson Davis, 106-113.
reception to First Mississippi Volunteers, upon return from War with Mexico, Jefferson Davis in command, 222-225.
New York, 194.
stopping place of Davis family while on New England trip, mentioned by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 359.
Nicaragua, foray upon, by William Walker, 254.
Norfolk, 138.
North, The, 364, 371, 375.
and The South, hatred growing, 424-425.
strife between, 375.
the "irrepressible conflict," drawing near, 363.
attitude toward John Brown Raid, 376.
extols John Brown Raid, 377.
Jefferson Davis' famous compromise speech, 262.
much to blame, according to Jefferson Davis, for political situation, 370.
old Whig party of, 370.
richness of, 424.
South determined to resist aggressive spirit of, 362.
Northwest Territory, connection with charges against Webster of improper use of funds, excerpt from *A Memoir,* by Varina Howell, 165.

O

O'Connor, Charles, portrait of, by Varina Howell, *A Memoir,* 313.
Old Trinity, 83.
Oregon Bill, amendment to, by Jefferson Davis, 260.
joint occupancy of, referred to in Varina Howell's *Memoir,* 189.
question, debate on, in Thirtieth Congress by Jefferson Davis, 334.
withdrawal from National Democratic Convention in 1860, 381.
Otis, Mrs. Harrison Grey, 455.
tribute to, by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* for help when her son, Jefferson Davis, was ill on New England trip, 358.

P

Pacific Railway, Jefferson Davis' part in building, 294.
Page, Rev. David, 98.
Panama, control of, views of Democratic party concerning, 254.
Pearce, Professor, 310.
mentioned by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 194, 358, 359.
Pearl of the Antilles, coveting of, as addition to United

States, views of Democratic party, 254.
Pemberton, James, slave to Jefferson Davis, 115, 126, 202, 208, 210, 279, 419, 437.
death of, 274.
provision for, in Jefferson Davis' will, 215.
tribute to foreman paid by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 275.
Pettit, John, connection with charges against Webster of improper use of funds, excerpt from *A Memoir,* by Varina Howell, 166.
Pettus, Gov. John J., appointment by, of Jefferson Davis as Major General in the army in Mississippi, 430.
Philadelphia, 342.
Picayune, the New Orleans, tribute to the Mississippi Volunteers, Jefferson Davis in command, 222-223.
Pickwick Papers, excerpt concerning, from *A Memoir,* 256.
Pierce, Ben, son of President and Mrs. Pierce, death of, from *A Memoir,* 302.
Pierce, Franklin, 284.
administration, constructive work during, 294-297.
administration, quietude of, had passed, 361.
administration, reminiscences of, excerpt from *A Memoir,* 298-323.
and Jefferson Davis, divergence between, excerpt from *A Memoir,* 305.
and wife, friendship with Jefferson Davis and Varina Howell, 315-316.
Cabinet of, Jefferson Davis, Secretary of War, the most distinguished member, 298.
friendship with Jefferson Davis and Varina Howell, 366.
his offer of a seat in the Cabinet to Jefferson Davis, 273.
his second invitation to Jefferson Davis to join the Cabinet as Secretary of War, accepted, 274.
Jefferson Davis most intimate and trusted friend of, 283, 285.
Jefferson Davis pointed out as worthy successor to, 283.
message to Congress on building of Pacific Railway, 294.
portrait of, from *A Memoir,* 303-304, 305, 306.
recognition of Jefferson Davis' ability as Secretary of War, 293.
regret at Jefferson Davis' resignation from Cabinet, excerpt from *A Memoir,* 327.
return to Concord after Buchanan's inauguration, 330.
Varina Howell's first acquaintance with, 151.
Mrs., wife of President Pierce, from *A Memoir,* 302, 303.
friendship with Varina Howell, 366.
Pittsburg, Varina Howell accompanies her husband to Washington, 142.
Pius IX, the Holy Father, 320.
Place d'Armes, New Orleans, reception to First Mississippi, Jefferson Davis, Colonel, 224.
Plot, John Brown, 379.

Polk, James K., 95, 97.
commented on by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 184.
Jefferson Davis as an elector for, in 1844, 127.
named Jefferson Davis as Regent of Smithsonian Institute, 242.
realization of duty to the state of Texas, 198.
Mrs., mentioned by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 184.
Pollard, 255.
Pontalba building, New Orleans, reception to First Mississippi, Jefferson Davis, Colonel, 224.
Populist, 49.
Portland, Free High School, Jefferson Davis and Varina Howell guests at Commencement Exercises of, as recorded in Varina Howell's *Memoir,* 354-355.
visited by Varina Howell and family on New England trip, as recorded in her *Memoir,* 352.
Post, The, 358.
Potomac, John Brown Raid, 376.
Prairie de Chien, 100.
Prentiss, Seargent S., 78, 79, 83, 95, 207, 349.
speaker at reception to First Mississippi, New Orleans, 223.
Whig speaker against Jefferson Davis for State Legislature, 90-91, 92.
President's Daughters, The, excerpt concerning, from *A Memoir,* 257.
Prince William County, Virginia, 230.
first known location of James Kempe in America, 13-14.
"Prometheus, my old," Varina Howell's reference to her husband in after years, 280.
Proviso, Wilmot, endorsement by some Northern legislatures, 261.

Q

Quitman, General John Anthony, death of, 329.
effort in behalf of liberty of Cuba, 254.
solicited to help free Cuba from Spain, 251.
withdrawal from gubernatorial contest in Mississippi, 265.

R

Raid, John Brown, 376-377, 387-388.
effect on the South, 377.
extolled in North, 377.
Read, Opie, 450.
Records, Congressional, 371.
Reed, Col. John, marriage to daughter of Gov. Richard Howell, 5.
Republicans, 331, 336, 337, 380.
a lineal descendant of Free Soilers with close kinship with old Whig party of the North, 370.
and abolitionists, strength of their combination, 390-391.
and the anti-slavery plank, 390-391, 392-393.
condemnation of their policies, by the South, 367.
Davis home sought by, during Jefferson Davis' illness, 341.
fear of South over methods of, 362.

in sympathy with John Brown Raid, 378.
now as strong as Democrats, 362.
protest of repeal of Missouri compromise, 370.
slavery reform a powerful plank in their platform, 370.
Varina Howell a social favorite of, 371.
and Jefferson Davis admired by, 439.
Rhett, 442.
in the National Democratic Convention in 1860, 380, 382, 383.
leader of the South, 369, 376, 387, 396, 398.
Rice, Mrs., Sister of Madame de Sartige, wife of French minister, 320-321.
child of Mrs. Rice, sister of Madame de Sartige, 321.
Richmond, 86, 174, 277, 377.
The Richmond Dispatch, 380, 435.
The Richmond Dispatch, comment on secession, 325.
The Richmond Dispatch, "The South can go," answer to Horace Greeley, 395.
Varina Howell's social prestige, 290.
Rio Grande, boundary line between Texas and Mexico, 197.
Roach, Colonel James, War with Mexico, 198.
Roberts, Colonel Robert N., companion to Jefferson Davis and Varina Howell on journey to Washington, 141-142.
Rodman, Captain, visit to Jefferson Davis, 322.
Roosevelt, 253.
"Rosemont," home of Samuel Davis, father of Joseph and Jefferson Davis, 103, 104.
Russia, Jefferson Davis' views on emancipation, 233.
military commission to, 299, 300.

S

Saltillo, scene of engagement in War with Mexico, 216.
Sand, George, excerpt concerning, from *A Memoir,* 256.
San Francisco, 306.
Santa Anna, Jefferson Davis leader of forces against, 430.
in command of Mexican forces, War with Mexico, 216, 217.
Sargent, Winthrop, 349.
Sartige, Madame de, wife of Comte de Sartige, French Minister, 320.
Comte de, French Minister to the United States, 299, 300.
Sawyer, Mr., 175.
Schenck, connection with charges against Webster of improper use of funds, excerpt from *A Memoir,* by Varina Howell, 166.
Schurz, Carl, tribute to Jefferson Davis as War Minister, 283.
Scott, General, 299, 300, 303, 306.
and Jefferson Davis, difference between, excerpt from *A Memoir,* 312-313.
Seaton, Mr. and Mrs., visit of Frederika Bremer, Swedish novelist, to home of, from *A Memoir,* 257.
Secession, 402-414.
a serious question, 362-365, 367-370.
and the Baltimore Convention, 385.
growth of the spirit of, in the South, 417.
Jefferson Davis' views of, 431.

raises its head, 331-347.
seeds sown for years, germination at hand, 369.
talked in Congress, 327.
threats of, 325.
Seddon, James, 174.
connection with charges against Webster of improper use of funds, excerpt from *A Memoir,* 166.
Varina Howell's first acquaintance with, 149.
Mrs. James, nee Sarah Bruce, 174.
Semmes, Captain, confrere of Jefferson Davis, 422.
Senate, Jefferson Davis' record in, 365.
impressions in the *Memoir* of Varina Howell when Jefferson Davis was a young Congressman, 178, 184-185, 195-196.
Jefferson Davis' return to, 327.
opposed, 326.
Varina Howell's impressions of life at the period of the Thirtieth Congress, 248.
Seward, W. H., 327, 340, 446, 455.
conciliatory speech, 404.
connection with charges against Webster of improper use of funds, excerpt from *A Memoir,* 165.
cooling of friendship with Jefferson Davis and Varina Howell, 400.
failure of compromise laid to, 396.
friendship with Jefferson Davis and Varina Howell, 328-329, 366, 371-372.
his finding that abolition of slavery would establish the Republican party, 392-393.
kindness to Varina Howell at time of birth of her second son, 323.
most powerful influence in Republican party, opinion of Varina Howell, 372.
on the causes of civil war, 336-337.
opposition to all Democratic measures, 372.
resolution commended to permit the Irish Temperance orator Matthew to sit in box of Senate, 263.
sick of controversy between the North and the South, 375-376.
speech on States' Rights, 261.
still directing policies of Republican party, 389.
Varina Howell's characterization of, in her *Memoir,* 347.
views on slavery as recorded in Varina Howell's *Memoir,* 346.
Seymour, Gov., mentioned by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 359.
Shubrick, Commodore, 317.
confrere of Jefferson Davis, 422.
Shepley, Mr. and Mrs., spoken of by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 353.
"Sir Galahad," a name of Varina Howell for her husband, 280.
Slavery, again a question, Thirty-sixth Congress, 324, 325, 326.
economic side of, 391.
in Natchez, excerpt from *The Southwest by a Yankee,* 38, 40.

issue reopened, Thirty-sixth Congress, 324, 325, 326.
Jefferson Davis' belief in, as divine blessing, shown in Varina Howell's *Memoir,* 334.
Jefferson Davis' views on, 331-332, 369-370.
New Territory, 339.
now a bitter issue, Thirty-first Congress, 260-263.
Slaves, Abolition of, 243-244.
attitude of Jefferson Davis toward, 438.
attitude toward Jefferson Davis, 229-231, 279.
celebration of, on the occasion of the birth of Samuel Emory Davis, 271-272.
treatment of, by Jefferson Davis, 275.
Varina Howell's attitude toward and treatment of, 269, 275-276.
Slidell, Mrs., Varina Howell's first glimpses of, 149-150.
Smith, Mrs. Luther, sister of Jefferson Davis, 102.
Smithsonian Institute, improvement of, under care of Jefferson Davis, Secretary of War, 294.
Jefferson Davis, on Board of Trustees, 295.
Jefferson Davis made a Regent of, 242.
Society, structure of, undergoing a change, 417.
South, The, 363, 364, 371.
and the economic side of slavery question, 391-392.
and The North, hatred grows, 424-425.
and The North, strife between, 375.
and Southern press, manifestation of spirit of secession, 325.
attitude toward Jefferson Davis, his famous compromise speech in behalf of preservation of Union, 261.
attitude toward John Brown Raid, 376.
denouncing of all movements toward exclusion of slaves from new territory, 260.
enthusiasm over secession, 403.
fearful of her position, 390.
hopes, after secession, that she would be left in peace, 423.
in desperate straits, 381.
Jefferson Davis' famous compromise speech, 262.
Jefferson Davis' longing for a definite settlement of issue, 326.
Jefferson Davis' political visit to, 368, 369-371.
Jefferson Davis' views on, 363-364, 369-371.
Jefferson Davis' views on emancipation, 233.
now determined on resistance, 375.
recognition of South Carolina as leader, 380.
removal of Jefferson Davis from general class of public men in, 237.
secession issue serious, 362.
and Union, comments by the *Richmond Dispatch* and the *Charleston Mercury,* 325.
wealth of, 369, 420.
South Carolina, 194, 243, 248, 257, 442, 447.
leader of the South, 387, 402-403.

secedes from the Union, 397-398.
shaping future of the South, 380.
withdrawal from National Democratic Convention, 381.
Southwest, the, 257.
Southwest by a Yankee, The, diary, description of Natchez, early home of Varina Howell, 26-40.
Speight, Senator Jesse, of Mississippi, death of, 236.
Spiritualism, experiments by Dr. Robert Hare, excerpt concerning, from *A Memoir,* 308.
"Squatter Sovereignty," 380, 381, 382, 384.
and Stephen A. Douglas, 379.
Stael, Mme. de., Varina Howell in the role of, at a masked ball, 291.
Stanford, Clement, execution of, by Spanish authorities, Cuban incident, 254.
States, New, admission into the Union, slavery question, 260-263.
States' Rights, 89, 243, 331, 333, 339, 359, 393.
championship of, by Jefferson Davis, 261.
discussion of, 368.
Jefferson Davis, leader of forces of, 341.
Jefferson Davis' views on, 363.
suspicion of its champion, Jefferson Davis, 363-364.
Stebbins, Rev. Mr., friend of the Davis family, characterized by Varina Howell in account of New England trip in her *Memoir,* 354.
St. Charles Hotel, New Orleans, bridal tour of Varina Howell and Jefferson Davis, 106-112.
St. Domingo, 311.
mentioned in Jefferson Davis' views on emancipation, 233.
Stephens, Alexander H., 398.
reference to, in Varina Howell's *Memoir,* 249, 250.
Steven, Major General, 6.
Stockton, Commodore, 257.
Stone, Dr. William, Jefferson Davis attended by, when his eye was inflamed, mentioned by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 342.
Sumner, Charles, portrait of, from *A Memoir,* by Varina Howell, 314.
quarrel with Brooks, 314.
Col. Edwin V., a visitor of Jefferson Davis during trouble with his eye, referred to by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 343.
George, 314, 315.
Supreme Court, 380.

T

Taney, Chief Justice, 380.
Tartar, Jefferson Davis' horse, 214.
Taylor family, 306.
General, deep concern over Jefferson Davis' wound received in Battle of Buena Vista, 218.
Battle of Buena Vista, War with Mexico, 217, 218.
War with Mexico, 198.
Sarah Knox, first wife of Jefferson Davis, 52.
Tennessee, 194.
Tennesseans, service with Andrew Jackson, 222.
Territory, New, 337.
regulation of political status, 379.

Texas, 98, 166, 215, 216, 447.
addition to the Union, 133.
annexation to the United States, 198.
invasion by Mexican troops, 198.
War with Mexico, 197.
withdrawal from National Democratic Convention in 1860, 381.
Thirteenth Street, home of Jefferson Davis and Varina Howell in Washington, 282.
Thirty-sixth Congress, the revival of old issues, 324-330.
witnessed the dissolution of the American Union, 387-397.
Thirty Years in the Senate, by Mr. Benton, mentioned by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 347.
Thompson, Jacob, Jefferson Davis' opponent in senatorial contest, 326-327.
Mr. and Mrs. Jacob, 157.
Tigers, German, reception to First Mississippi, New Orleans, 223.
Toombs, leader of the South, 327, 369, 376, 387, 396, 424, 442.
Mr. and Mrs., characterized by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 248-250.
Totten, General, 299, 300.
excerpt concerning, from *A Memoir,* 312.
Towson, General, 310.
Tremont House, Boston, stopping place of Davis family on New England trip, mentioned by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 358.
Twiggs, General David, a caller when Varina Howell was passing through Mobile, 282.
Tyler, Ex-President, connection with charges against Webster of improper use of funds, excerpt from *A Memoir,* by Varina Howell, 167.
his discussion with Jefferson Davis at the National Exposition on Mr. Webster's administration of the "secret-service money," 173.
Varina Howell's comments on her meeting with him at the National Exposition, 172-174.

U

Uncle Tom's Cabin, 379, 387.
Union, The, Jefferson Davis had no desire to see disrupted, 363.
United States Hotel, mentioned by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 248.

V

Van Buren, Martin, 49, 63, 100.
Varina Howell's first glimpses of Washington, 151, 152.
Vattemare's international exchange of literature, advocated by Jefferson Davis while on Library Committee, 242.
Vicksburg, 137, 138, 153, 198, 269, 274, 276, 433, 448.
place of first meeting between Varina Howell and Calhoun, 129.
reception to First Mississippi, Jefferson Davis, Colonel, upon return from War with Mexico, 226-227.
social prestige of Varina Howell and Jefferson Davis, 265.
Victoria, Queen, cablegram of, mentioned by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 359-360.

comparison with Varina Howell. 234, 238.
Vinton, connection with charges against Webster of improper use of funds, excerpt from *A Memoir,* by Varina Howell, 167.
Virginia, 4, 12, 13, 14, 17, 93, 174, 194, 243, 287, 447.
dissatisfied in National Democratic Convention in 1860, 381.
resolution offered by, in National Democratic Convention in 1860, 381.
scene of John Brown Raid, 376, 377, 378.

W

Wade, 424.
Wainright, Mrs. Richard, mentioned by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 180.
Walker, Mary, afterwards Mrs. Brewster, mentioned by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 180-181.
Mrs. Robert J., mentioned by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 180.
Robert J., a visit to his home when he was Secretary of the Treasury, described by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 178-179.
mentioned by Varina Howell in her *Memoir* as a guest at Coast Survey suppers, 181.
William, foray upon Nicaragua, views of Democratic party on, 254.
Wall Street, 164.
War, Department, fire proof buildings, undertaken by Jefferson Davis, Secretary of War, 295.
of 1812, 190.
participation of James Kempe, in Andrew Jackson's campaign against the British, 15.
service of William B. Howell, 8-9.
with Mexico, 198-222, 251.
happy termination, 294.
Jefferson Davis, debate on, 242.
prophesied, 198.
Washington, 79, 87, 182, 244, 248, 281, 284, 339, 342, 343, 349.
a hot bed of politics, 361.
change in political and social circles during winter of 1859-60, 361.
first glimpses by Varina Howell, 144-151.
Jefferson Davis' return trip after political tour of the South, 368.
life in, most attractive to Varina Howell, 366.
religious atmosphere of, 246.
Varina Howell's first glimpses, 144-151.
village of, described in *The Southwest by a Yankee,* 34.
Washington, George, 6, 7-8, 445, 447.
Watterson, Henry, on the John Brown Raid, 377.
Wayne, Mrs., 322.
Webster, Daniel, 242, 363.
admiration for Jefferson Davis, 261.
appearance and manner, excerpt from *A Memoir,* 258-259.
characterization by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 191-192.
charged with improper expen-

diture of secret-service money, 164-167.
charged with improper expenditure of secret-service money, Tyler's and Jefferson Davis' discussion, 173.
debate with Jefferson Davis, 261.
Mrs., 257, 259.
Sidney, Pierce's private secretary, from *A Memoir,* 301-302, 358.
West Indies, Jefferson Davis' views on emancipation, 232.
West Point, 282.
defense of, by Jefferson Davis, 175, 176.
Johnnie Meig's appointment to, by Jefferson Davis, 322.
mentioned by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 181.
West, The, Jefferson Davis' famous compromise speech, 262.
Jefferson Davis' views on emancipation, 233.
the welfare of, taken much to heart by Jefferson Davis, 331, 332.
Westerners, feeling for Douglas, 380.
Wheeling, 138.
Varina Howell accompanies her husband to Washington, 142.
Whigs, 49, 62, 63, 78, 79, 82-84, 88, 90-92, 94, 95, 98, 100, 101, 130, 176, 243, 267, 274, 276, 331, 335, 447.
and Jefferson Davis, 137.
and Southern Democracy, internal dissension, 263.
change in their attitude, socially, toward Jefferson Davis, 206-207.
favorable comment on Jefferson Davis, 260.
in Mississippi twit Jefferson Davis' constituents on his apparent wavering, 363.
of the North, 370.
opposition to War with Mexico, 197.
pride in their social position, 206.
recognition by, of Jefferson Davis, 236.
their friendship with Jefferson Davis through his marriage with Varina Howell, 127.
White House, 164, 283.
visit to, by Varina Howell, her first glimpses of Washington, 151-152.
Wilde, Oscar, 111.
Willard's Hotel, Washington, 321, 329-330.
Wilson, Woodrow, 341.
Winchester, Judge George, tutor to Varina Howell, 40, 43, 45-46, 49, 63, 71, 78, 79, 84, 93, 207, 219, 220, 225, 286, 287, 447.
death of, 87.
deep affection of Varina Howell for, 448-449.
his fondness for and knowledge of Massachusetts, 349.
influence on Varina Howell, 340.
as indicated in her *Memoir,* 286.
of his teaching, 246.
Wingate, Mrs. Charles, referred to by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 353.
Winnebago, 199.
"Winnie," Jefferson Davis' name for his wife, 401.
Winthrop, Robert C., mention of him by Varina Howell in her *Memoir,* 183, 358.
Winthrop, connection with charges

against Webster of improper use of funds, excerpt from *A Memoir,* 166.
Woodbury, Judge, Varina Howell's first glimpses of Washington, 148.
Mrs., wife of Judge Woodbury, Varina Howell's first glimpses of Washington, 148.

Y

Yagers, German, reception to First Mississippi, New Orleans, 223.
Yancey, at the National Democratic Convention in 1860, 380, 382, 383.
leader of the South, 369, 376, 380, 387, 396, 424.
Yellow River, 100.
Yucatan, annexation, views of Democratic party on, 254.

199
201
277-8-9
280
287